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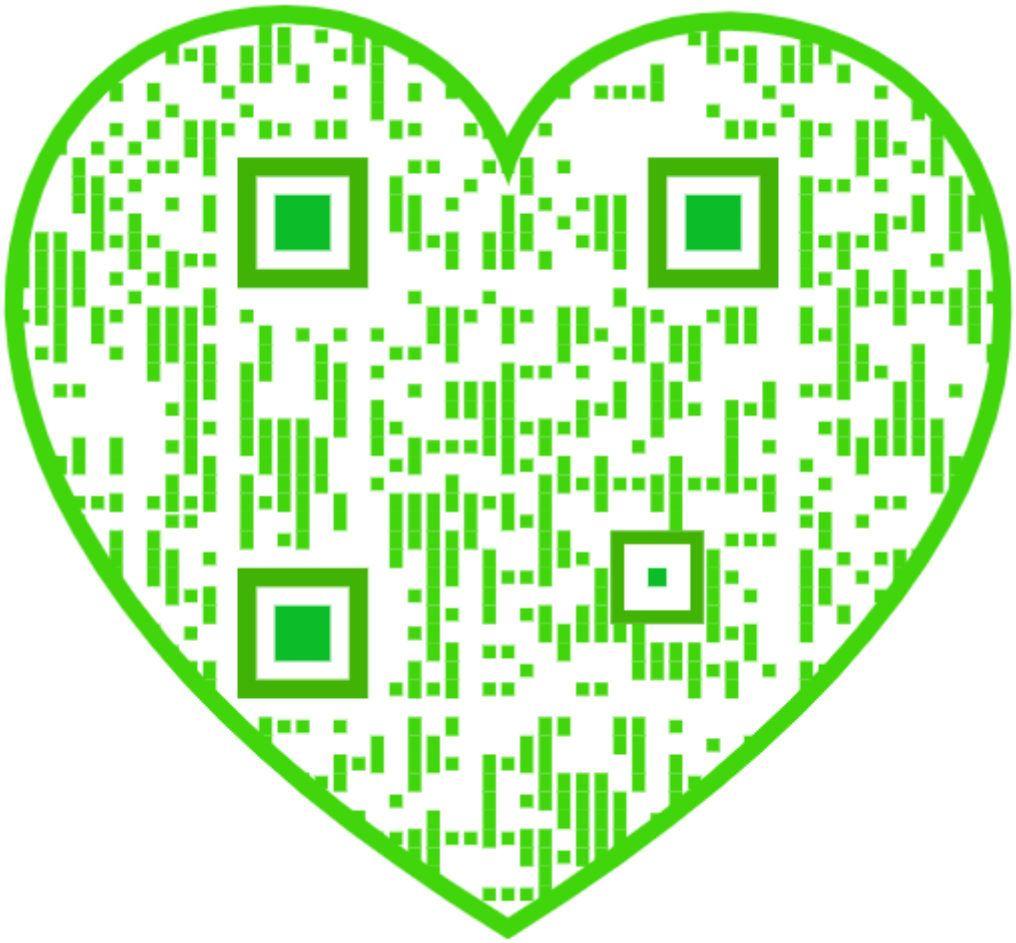

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FORTY YEARS OF TROUT AND SALMON FISHING

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THE AUTHOR.

Frontispiece. *Photo by G. Hooper.*

FORTY YEARS OF TROUT AND SALMON FISHING

by

J. L. Dickie

Author of
"Peter Tamson, Elder o' the Kirk and Sportsman," &c.

With an introduction by

R. B. Marston

Editor of "The Fishing Gazette."

HEATH CRANTON LIMITED
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To
COLONEL THE LORD SEMPILL,
Late the Black Watch,
OF
CRAIGIEVAR AND FINTRAY.

In grateful recollection of happy days spent on the Fintray waters of the Aberdeenshire Don, over a period of many years.

908730

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FOREWORD.

My only excuse for offering this book to my fellow fishermen is the fact that I, personally, can never get enough to read on my favourite sport; and thinking there may be others similarly placed, I venture to hope that my experiences of trout and salmon fishing over forty years may possibly be a little interesting to them.

J. L. D.

February, 1921.

INTRODUCTION.

When Major Dickie told me he had had forty years' experience in Salmon fishing, and asked me if I would look at a book he had written, and perhaps suggest a publisher, I said I would with pleasure do so. By a curious coincidence at the time I was writing to the Major to say how much I liked his work and that I was sure it was just what salmon anglers, and would-be salmon anglers, would like, I got a note from Mr. Cranton, of Messrs. Heath Cranton Ltd., saying if I came across a good fishing book would I let him know. It was all the more striking because I never knew a time when, owing to the trebled cost of production, works on sport are so heavily handicapped as at present. So all I had to do was to say: "Major Dickie Mr. Cranton—Mr. Cranton Major Dickie." and the one being a good angler and the other a good publisher, I knew they would soon come to terms. Up to then I had only known the Major in connection with his duties as Medical Commandant of the Star and Garter Red Cross Hospital at Richmond during the war. When I met him and Mrs. Dickie, who, like my own wife, is a keen angler, I told him that in addition to liking his book for the interest of its matter and pleasant straight forward style, it had a special attraction, as it mentions actual places and people—the rivers fished and the names of the salmon pools—and gives good illustrations of many of them. So many famous 'casts' and 'beats' are mentioned, that I can see in my mind's eye every salmon angler who takes it up saying, "Why, that is where I fished, or was going to fish, or hope to fish"—the places we tell each other about over the fire in the smoking room at the club, or in the angler's fishing lodge, or hotel or on the water. Providing one's quarters are comfortable, these yarns at night, often with men you have only just met for the first time, are delightful, and as I told Major Dickie, his book reminds one of those times. Like him, it is some 40 years since I killed my first salmon, and although we may agree not to

agree with all our Author describes, I am sure we shall all thank him for his book. Major Dickie's amusing experience with the eels and the English butler in his first chapter reminds me of the story William Black told us when we were snowed in at Langwell Lodge on that lovely little salmon river, the Oykell—it was also of an English butler, who gave notice when told the family was going to Scotland; asked his reason, he said he had heard the Highlands were "infested with eagles." But if I went on referring to things of which this book reminds me I should be writing another. I am glad to see Major Dickie in his third chapter brings home to salmon anglers a danger which, I fear, too many of them do not think does or can affect their sport. Referring to the Aberdeenshire Dee, which of all the rivers he has fished he knows best and has fished most, he says: "On the whole, it is a river that suffers very little from pollution, but if road-tarring becomes universal, one trembles to think of what may happen in the future." Almost every river has a road on one side of it, often on both sides, and if tar is used and surface water from the road can get in, it means that all the year after rain, carbolic acid is finding its way into the river. I am on a joint committee of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries appointed to consider road-tarring as affecting our fisheries. One object was to see if it is possible to make a tar which will be safe to use. I confess my experience of so-called purified tars, extending over the period since tar was first used on roads, gave me little ground for hoping any safe tar could be made. We have some of the best chemists of the day on our committee, and I regret to say their experiments show that all tars are fatal to fish life. If salmon bred in the sea and simply came into our rivers to afford sport for anglers and food for the people, the big fish might not be affected so much. In an old Scottish fishery case a solicitor who was told salmon did not spawn in the sea said they ought to be made to, and suggested barring the rivers to them till they got used to it. But the salmon is born in fresh water, and must pass the first year or two of its life in the river; and it has been proved that a quantity of the poisonous products of tar too small to trace by any chemical tests is fatal to the germs of fish life. No one interested in the future of our salmon and other fisheries can afford to ignore this great and widespread tar danger,—already it has destroyed some of our finest trout fisheries. In the United States

up to the end of 1919 over ten thousand miles of motor roads had been made with reinforced concrete which is harmless to fish, and has been found better and in the long run cheaper than tar. I think the only hope for our fisheries is the use of such a road dressing as will not injure fish and fish food. I have been fighting against this tar menace in season and out of season for many years. I am sure a work like this is an entirely appropriate one in which to refer to it, for it threatens the very existence of not only the fishing, but of all those delightful things described by Major Dickie which are inseparably connected with the sport.

Having edited an angling paper every week for over forty-years, I think I know what the majority of anglers like in any account of the sport; at any rate, I know one thing they do not like, and that is "fine writing." I have known fine anglers who were delightful to listen to, but intolerable to read. As I said before, Major Dickie writes just as he would tell us his story if we were listening to him, and if all writers on sport did that they would be infinitely more interesting. We all know how important the ghillie is. I have fished with English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish ghillies, and have very pleasant memories of most of them; Major Dickie's chapter on them, one of the best, recalls many a fine man whom it is a pleasure to have known. Out in all weathers on moor and loch and river, they seem to get something from Nature which makes them nearer to it than ordinary mortals; something strikes you as having altered in the view of hills and river since you last looked up from your fishing, and you call your ghillie's attention to it, and probably he will say just that "its no a good sign" or "its no a bad sign,"—he has seen it and noted it countless times and knows what it means. You feel you are in the scene just by accident and for a brief space, but that your ghillie is part of it, like the pines and the rocks. Of course, for bright talk and humour no ghillie can come near an Irish one, and if there are no good portents, he will invent some. Even if things are hopelessly against the chances of sport, the intensity and originality of his maledictions on the supposed causes save the situation. An English friend who used to go to Ireland for fishing said to me the other day, "Shall we ever want to go again?" A little later I asked an Irish friend who lives in England, who gets fine salmon angling on the Shannon, if he would go any more. "And

why not? Why should we let the d—— Sinn Feiners have all the fish?"

Major Dickie is not a salmon "fly only" man, as I foolishly was for too many years, and so lost the best of good salmon fishing because it was not "fly water." My early salmon fishing friends were most of them men who thought spinning for salmon almost illegal, and tempting a salmon with a prawn or any other "bait" was sheer poaching. Our Author evidently prefers the fly, but will offer a Cockney Thames dace to a Highland salmon, if need be; it will be seen he has something to say about trout and other fishing, and has a chapter on fishing for mahseer in India. I really do not know why he asked me to write this "Introduction"—a rambling one at that—but at least it enables me to hope that other anglers will find it as interesting as I have done. As one reads through it, like wading down a salmon pool, there are plenty of bits to catch the eye—bits of quiet fun and humour, in addition to the fishing.

R. B. MARSTON.

CHAPTER I

My first fishing rod—The great adventure—My first trout—Catch of salmon fry—My first sea trout—Kindly help—Wretched eels.

It was my good fortune in my early youth to live in a very charming old house, with several acres of old-fashioned grounds, in the Granite City-by-the-Sea, placed midway between the Rivers Dee and Don. Through the grounds meandered a decent-sized burn, which contained many minnows and sticklebacks.

I first tried my 'prentice hand on these with a butterfly net, and used to make large bags.

I then heard that there were a few trout in the reach of the stream just above our garden. There was a broad viaduct, which made a fearsome tunnel, through which the burn passed, and in this part the bed of the stream was of sandstone, which time and flood water had hollowed into basins about six feet or eight feet in diameter, and several feet deep. These limpid pools, I was told, contained trout.

A dear old aunt, who, by the way, died last year at the great age of ninety-six, gave me, somewhere about my seventh birthday, half-a-crown to buy a fishing rod. Escorted by Lisbeth, my nurse, I paid a thrilling and long-remembered visit to the

Aberdeen Market Gallery. What an afternoon of excitement it was : I was going to buy a *real fishing rod !* I think that first purchase at the age of seven gave me far greater joy than, when in later years, I became the proud possessor of a sixteen foot Hardy " Special " splitcane steel centre. The gentleman in charge of the stall was a " crabbit body," and did not at all seem to understand that I was there, not only to get half-a-crown's worth of inferior fishing rod, but half-a-crown's worth of real unadulterated joy in choosing it. The weapon which I bought was in two pieces, of ash, stained a rich brown-red. It had a top ring and one ring on each joint. It was about seven feet long, and a most " cutcha " thing. Lisbeth suggested a nice gaudy one of bamboo, which was sixpence cheaper, but I wasn't " having any," and told her (aet seven) it would split. I bore it home in triumph, and my joy in it was quite complete until an elder brother remarked :

" Silly ass ! You have no reel and line." I nearly wept ; and, seeing my distress, my aunt asked what was wrong, and on finding out what my trouble was, tipped me another half crown. A second visit was paid to the Market Stall, and a cheap brass reel (2s.) with a ring and clip to fasten it to the rod, plus three bait hooks, completed my outfit. The great adventure was about to materialise, and now to catch my first trout. The tunnel was a dark and fearsome place, so I persuaded a friend, Frank H., to accompany me. We spent some time digging up worms in the garden, which we put in an old cocoa tin, and after fixing up rod, line and hook, started on the great quest. We clambered down the walls of the burn, and wandered

up its bed until we came to the viaduct, which we entered rather in fear and trembling. We had scarcely got into the darkness, when an owl or a bat, scared us nearly out of our lives, and we almost gave it up. The magic word "trout," however, was too strong for us, and we went bravely on. There was a glimmer of light from the entrance, and I carefully dropped a worm into one of the tiny pools. I felt a strange vibration of the rod, and jerked up the point. Out flew a trout, which hit poor F. in the face, and with one wild yell he dashed homewards. Hastily gathering up rod, line and trout, I followed suit, rushing up the garden with yells of delight—I had killed my first trout! I caught a few more in the tunnel pools from time to time, then the supply of trout seemed to give out. No more were forthcoming.

As years went on I got better gear, and fished the Old Mill Burn, Walker's Dam, Gilcomston Dam, and various other waters within walking distance of my home. I caught many trout, and occasionally a sockdollager weighing ¼lb.

We frequently spent the summer at Banchory, and I was allowed to fish the Beltie, or Cannie; sometimes with worm, sometimes with fly.

On one memorable occasion I had returned with several dozen fish, and met our landlord in the garden as he was returning from a "tatie" digging expedition. I proudly showed my catch. Old Birse looked very grim, and said:

"Weel, ma mannie, there's nae a troot amang them. They're a' salmon parr, an' that lot'll jeest cost yer faither aboot a hunder poonds if the Polis get word o't."

I shivered, and seeing my distress he kindly added :

" Better gie them tae me an' I'll get Nansy (his daughter) tae pit them awa' an' say naething aboot it."

Passing their cottage in the evening, there was a strong and fragrant odour of fried fish to be felt ! Still, it was a blessing in disguise, for Birse carefully explained the difference between trout and salmon fry, and I don't remember ever making a mistake about them again.

What happy days those were ! Two or three of us would take the train from Banchory to Glassel, and fish the Beltie from there down to Invercannie Mills. I made a great friend of a dear old gentleman named Williamson, who kept a little General Merchant's shop at Invercannie, and many a glass of milk with Ginger-bread or Shorty, and a handful of bulls-eyes or chocolate thrown in, did I receive at his hands. He had a wooden leg, and came to Church each Sunday at Banchory, and I used to cock my ears and listen for the sound of that leg as it creaked heavily up the aisle.

One day I was looking over the Bridge of Feugh watching the salmon leap, and gazing with longing eyes as old Craven, Major Milner's keeper, pulled out one great sea-trout after another from the pool below the Bridge. He was running a very fine fish, and I was nearly over the parapet in my excitement. A lady grabbed me from behind, and prevented my going to a horrible death on the rocks below.

" Are you very fond of fishing ? "

" I love it."

She asked my name and where I lived. That evening a groom rode up with a letter. To the

astonishment of my family it was for me (aet twelve), and an answer was requested. In great excitement I opened it and read. It was an invitation to lunch the following day with Major Milner of Riverstone, whose wife had grabbed me by the tail of my jacket in the morning. A post-script said :—

"Bring your fishing rod."

I consulted my mother, who said I might go if I promised really to behave nicely, and, incidentally, not get drowned. I sat down and wrote the best letter of thanks and acceptance I could think of. I got very little sleep that night. I had never been out to lunch with grown-ups on my own before, and it was a little terrifying.

The next day I arrived at Riverstone at 1 o'clock, and was shown by a grave and ponderous butler into the smoking-room, where Major Milner was reading. I felt very shy and self-conscious, but he quickly put me at my ease, and showed me all his fishing tackle, rods and guns, until the gong went. There were four of us at lunch—Major and Mrs. Milner, a lady whose name I forget, and myself. After a hearty feed I was handed over to old Craven, the keeper, a very old man whose teeth had a peculiar click when he talked. I speedily made friends with him, and putting up the rods we walked to the Bridge Pool. This pool is immediately below the Bridge, and has a deep basin with shelving rock, impossible to fish properly with fly, as it is a whirlpool for the most part, and the fly will not lie properly in it. Salmon, grilse and sea-trout are killed there, often in very large numbers after a spate, and nearly always with large lobworms, and hooks on strong treble gut ; as, if a fish leaves the pool you are done, and cannot follow it—at least, from the Riverstone

side. My own rod was too short and too light for this work, and Craven had lent me one from the rod box which was placed near the summer-house on the rock over-hanging the pool. He also fitted me out with a strong cast and a large bait hook, on which he impaled a fat and succulent red lobworm. He showed me how to fish the pool, which is by no means an easy one, as you are so apt to catch your tackle in the rocks at the bottom of it.

My first fish was a small and wretched eel, which gave much trouble before we could get the hook clear. I put on a new worm myself, with Craven's eagle and critical eye on me the while.

"Noo, that'll dae, and mebbe ye'll get a 'gilse.'" (He never pronounced the "r" in "grilse," for some reason best known to himself.) In a few minutes I was in to a good fish.

"Up wi' the p'int, quick, or ye'll lose him. Now haud him sair, or he'll be doun the gully, an' ye'll lose him. Damn! he's awa'—no, he's there yet. Dinna be ower hard. Gently, now, bring him to me at the neck there and I'll net him." And in a trice a sea-trout of 3 lbs. clean run, was on the rock beside me. My first real *large* fish! What if it *was* with worm? I'd not have changed places with the Queen at that moment. I nearly hugged Craven, and I am sure I hugged the fish. I got nothing more that day, but after an excellent tea, and a cordial invitation from Major Milner to come any day I liked to fish with Craven, I danced home to show my glorious, glorious fish. There was rejoicing at my luck, and we had that trout for breakfast next day. Was there ever such a breakfast—oat-cakes, cream, butter, scones, and that trout.

I was fairly daft about fishing now, and was out every day. One day Craven said :—

"We'll take the boat and fish the Junction Pool where the Feugh enters the Dee, but you will have my salmon rod, and it's a heavy one for a wee chap like you."

I said I was equal to anything, so we got the boat out, and Craven put a small silver doctor on the cast, and having anchored the boat, handed me his enormous hickory rod. It *was* a weight. Every cast nearly precipitated me into the river, but I stuck to it right manfully. I caught nothing, however, on that occasion, but an ache in every muscle, for the rod was of Brobdignag, and I was of Lilliput. Still, it was all experience, and I enjoyed every minute of it thoroughly.

Shortly after this I got permission from Mr. R. S. Hills to fish a long stretch of the Feugh higher up, and often took advantage of this. One day I had tramped three miles to the water, and discovered I had left my fly book, with all my casts and flies, at home. This was most annoying, and I sat on the bank and pondered over my idiocy in doing such a thing. A gentleman came up, rod in hand.

"Well, having any sport, my boy ? "

"No, like an idiot I left my fly book behind, and it's three miles away at Banchory."

"I suppose you have permission to fish ? "

"Oh, yes, here is my letter of permission," and I handed him the note—his own—for it was Mr. Hills.

"Well, now, I will see what I can do to help you." He sat down beside me, and pulling out his book he gave me a couple of very fine gossamer casts

mounted with three of the finest and most delicate little flies I had ever seen. They were a complete revelation to me, as my stuff was the usual coarse gut and clumsy penny-a-time fly of the local grocer, chemist or general merchant. This cast was indeed a prize. I thanked him most gratefully, and caught several quite passable fish.

Another day I was fishing on the same beat, but the river was in high spate, and worms the only thing to use. Nothing seemed to be on the take but eels, and I caught some twenty of these, which I left on the bank at the different places where I caught them. I sat down to rest, and an elderly, stout man, whom I could see was a gentleman's servant, came up.

"Any sport, sir?"

"Nothing but wretched eels, which I hate."

He peeped into my basket.

"You must have lost them, sir, they are not in your creel."

"In my basket! Of course not, dirty, slimy things!"

"What did you do with them, sir?"

"I left them on the bank wherever I caught them."

"Left them—fine eels—my God!" And he was off down the bank like a hare, and I roared with laughter as I saw him pick them up one by one at the different places. He was a cockney, and I had been led to understand that the English actually ate eels!

CHAPTER II

An artificial spate—One eyed trout—The Dee as a trout river—Acquiring skill—My first Salmon.

ANOTHER burn I used to fish was the Aan, which meant a very long walk. It was full of small trout, and a basket of eight or ten dozen was a common occurrence. One often got a lift on a wood or carrier's cart, so that the distance was no barrier.

Another tiny burn called the Cammie, which also ran into the Feugh, was a favourite. One day a friend and I went to fish this small burn, but it was so clear and low that we had no luck. We sat down to consider the situation. I said :

" Have you got any money, Bill ? "

" Sixpence in coppers."

And I had fivepence.

" What about it ? "

" Well, you wait and see. Give me your sixpence."

Having annexed the sixpence, I walked up to the Mill half a mile above, where I knew there were three or four small but sturdy boys. I told them that if they would go and throw mud and " divots " into the burn for two hours, I would give them tenpence, and that when they had finished their task they could come down and collect the money.

"Aye, an' find ye gone, mebbe."

"Well, if I pay you now you will collar the money and not throw any divots."

"Well, gie's hauf."

"No, I will give you threepence now and the rest after. Away you go, and begin."

I returned to William.

"Where's my sixpence?"

"Here," and I showed it. Then I explained the plan. In less than half-an-hour the burn was coming down fine and drumly, and we were pulling out good trout, until we had a couple of dozen between us, the largest of which was half a pound. This was with worm, of course. Our artificial spate was a great success.

It is very curious now to look back on that episode, in view of the fact that on the Thurso River, and I think also upon one of the Esks, artificial spates to put the river in order are resorted to upon a very large scale.

One trout that I caught that day was forcibly impressed on my memory. It weighed about quarter of a pound, and it had only one eye—the left. There was no sign of injury whatever, the skin being smooth and complete where the right eye should have been. I wish I had it now to dissect and find the reason of this arrested development, or whatever it may have been.

Bill was delighted with our success, but insisted on my handing over a penny. I had paid the boys tenpence, and there was a penny over. He said that as he had the largest share of the capital that penny ought to be his. I said "No"—but for my idea of the artificial spate he would have caught no

trout, which were surely worth a penny. He stuck to it, however, like glue.

William had a curious temper, for fishing later with me one day in the Old Mill Burn near Aberdeen, I caught eight trout to his nothing. He got in a furious temper, and smashed his rod to matchwood, swearing he would never fish again, and using language for a twelve year old which fairly made me blink. I don't think he ever did fish again—at least, I can recall no other occasion on which he did.

In the ponds at the Bleachfield in the suburbs of Aberdeen were some very good trout, and I caught a few there with fly and also with worm, but they were very shy, and it seemed hardly worth while for all one caught. I believe a Mr. Gavin Coutts, who then had a grocer's shop in the Old Toll House, once killed a very large trout there—over twelve pounds if I recollect aright—and but for the thought of a similar giant falling to my rod, I would not have fished there as often as I did.

Although the Dee is supposed to be purely a salmon river, it contains in places a great many very beautiful trout. But these are extremely shy, and will seldom or never take a trout fly, although occasionally they are caught with a salmon fly or worm, or in a spate with a minnow.

I remember once fishing at Sandy Havens on the Kinneskie water. The river was just beginning to rise, and where I was fishing a son of the hotel keeper came down and began to fish. He was using a minnow, and in half-an-hour or so had the prettiest bag of trout—seven, I think—none under one pound, and the largest about three pounds in weight. I was green with envy. However, he was an old hand, and I was merely in the very early

novitiate stage. I often came home night after night empty-handed, vowing I'd never fish again, but the next day—perhaps just the right kind of day, a soft, dewy, dowie day—and I was off as keen as ever, and so to this day.

As time went on I used occasionally to put a salmon fly on my trout rod and see if I could not come to grips with the Monarch of the River, but with no success, although occasionally I did hook one with a trout fly, which, of course, was never landed. I was very keen to kill my first salmon, but there were many things conducive to success of which I was totally ignorant—the sort of fly to use on bright days and dark days, the size of iron in relation to size of water, particular pools, depth of pools, and season of the year, were still matters of mystery to me. But gradually, almost imperceptibly, I got to know these important things, and also discovered that many pools which looked certain for fish never held one, thus emphasising the fact that in fishing new water for salmon one ought always, if possible, to have a local guide to avoid much waste of precious time, and unnecessary irritation.

I have seen a man fishing in a pool on a beat I know well, one in which fish would not lie, although it looked ideal, and have usually been gratefully thanked for saving valuable time to the angler by pointing this out. On the other hand, I have met the superior individual who will not be told anything about fishing, as he is quite convinced that what he doesn't know about it, no matter on what water or under what conditions, isn't worth knowing.

One month of August I had a roving commission to fish the Aboyne Castle waters. I took my four-

THE FIR PARK POOL, ABERGELDIE, ABERDEENSHIRE DEE.
Photo. Bisset, Ballater.

To face p. 30.

teen foot spliced Castle Connel—my first approach to a salmon rod, and a good one it was—and wended my way through the lovely Laurn Haugh to the Laurn Pool. It is a very long pool indeed just at the bend of the river where the Tana enters it. To my mind it fishes best from the Castle slde—that is, from shallow to deep. It was a blazing hot day, and I had only gone out to fish for fishing's sake, but without any expectation of doing anything great. I had no waders in those days, but waded in sans waders nearly waist-deep, and threw a fairly long line. I had on a small butcher on double irons, summer salmon size. After fishing for an hour or so, and doing nothing, I observed that the water was becoming drumly, or cloudy, and concluded there had been a thunder storm up country. I came out, and put on a double iron butcher of rather a larger size, knotting it on carefully, and after testing my cast, went at it again. After a few casts I got a sharp rug, and knew I was in for something good. It proved to be a sea-trout, and put up a very good fight. I came out very pleased with myself, hit the fish on the head and put it in my bag. The water was now rising fairly rapidly, and I hurried in again lest it should become too heavy and opaque for further fishing.

At the second cast I was into a fish again, and after a glorious fight of about fifteen minutes (remember my rod was very light and I, inexperienced), I got the fish—evidently a salmon—near enough to the beach to reach for the long gaff, which, so far, had never been blooded. I held the rod carefully over my left shoulder and gaffed him quickly. How my heart fluttered as I swung him out and ran with him impaled on the gaff at least twenty yards from

the river before I laid him down. A dump on the head, and I placed the fish—a three and a half pound grilse—in the bag beside his little cousin.

In I went again, and fished as eagerly as ever angler did. At the end of ten minutes or so I had another terrific rug, that made my "heart jump into my mouth," and the rod was nearly bent double. Straight as a die he went slap across the pool, and as I anxiously looked at my reel I found all but a few yards of my line were out. The run across the now roaring torrent rather winded him, and I got him back across the main stream to the quieter water on my side. By this time I had recovered a good deal of line, and waited his further pleasure. I hadn't long to wait, for he made off seawards as hard as he could leg it, and being in still water on my side he could go very fast. I dashed out on the bank and ran as hard as I could. Fortunately, he did not leave the pool, but stupidly, from his point of view, began to cross into the heavy stream, bore upwards and threw himself out of the water several times to my horror, for I was sure I would lose him. By this time I was in a great state of excitement inwardly—and little wonder. My first real salmon, I was only just fourteen, and had no one near me to help. My legs trembled, my mouth was as dry as a board, and I didn't know what to do. After jigging a few times, he bore up-stream again, as if quite determined to reach the pool above, but this didn't in the least matter, as I could follow him easily. Just as he got to the neck of the pool I put more pressure on him, and he came lollopping down, turning over and over, and showing the white of his belly through the now highly coloured water. Instinct—I suppose it was instinct—told me this was

my chance, and I keel-hauled him rapidly down to where the gaff was sticking in the sand. As I grasped the gaff he saw the glint of the steel in the bright sun, and made a final plunge outwards. My heart sank—there he was, "so near and yet so far." However, I was desperate now, and giving him the butt very hard, got him within reach. I was about to gaff him when I slipped upon a stone, and fell very nearly on the top of him. Off he flew, but being pretty well done, I butted him hard, once more got him within range, and gaffed him. I ran up the beach with him impaled on the gaff, and soon gave him his quietus. I was quite "done," and perspiring at every pore. I laid out the three fish, and a pretty picture they were. They were all slightly tinged with red, owing to the season of the year and the time they had been in the water, but to me their beauty was unsurpassed as they lay there on the grass. I hastily bundled them into the bag, and walked the mile home faster than I had ever done before. I was greeted with a great chorus of rejoicing on reaching the house.

My first salmon, then, was three, so to speak, and I was very proud indeed.

Next morning in bed, before getting up, it suddenly occurred to me what an idiot I had been not to have fished on, and so I think now, for it was, I am convinced, one of those Red Letter Days, few enough in an angler's lifetime, when one can hardly go wrong; the water right, the fly right—in fact, everything right for a record day.

Still, I was only a boy, and dying to let my people see what I could do, and could not wait longer to do so.

CHAPTER III

The Aberdeenshire Dee as a Salmon river—Earlier closing of rod fishing—Club whisky—Casting versus harling—My largest fish on the Dee—A freezing experience—Two legal luminaries Salmon fishing—A judge turned upside down—The Commonty water—A great day on Glentana—Stage v. Salmon—A Reverend Damn—Lord Randolph Churchill—A Royal audience—An old man's first Salmon—A case of prescience.

PERHAPS of all the rivers I have fished I know the beautiful Aberdeenshire Dee best, and to my mind there is no more lovely river in Great Britain. The Aberdeenshire Dee rises from the Wells of Dee in the Cairngorms above Braemar, and runs a course of between eighty and ninety miles, for the most part through glorious scenery, and falls into the sea at Aberdeen.

On the whole, it is a river that suffers very little from pollution, but if road-tarring becomes universal, one trembles to think of what may happen in the future.

The season is from 11th February to 31st October for the rod, and for net from 11th February to 26th August. I never can understand why the Fishery Board does not close this river for rod fishing on 30th September, for at least in the upper regions the hen fish are full of spawn from that date onwards, and undoubtedly many billions of valuable

ova are destroyed annually through hen fish being killed with the rod late in the season. It might be argued that such fish could be returned to the water, but unless a landing net be used, instead of a gaff, as at present, the fish would not survive, and I believe that even if a landing net was used, many of the fish would succumb to the shock of hook and net, or fall an easy prey to disease in their weakened condition, if returned to the water. Doubtless the lower and middle proprietors would argue that it would be most unfair to penalise those who reap a rich harvest of clean run Autumn fish, because in the upper waters hundreds of spawners are killed ; and few clean fish reach these upper reaches, except in seasons of heavy spate, after the nets are off. Granted that this is a legitimate grievance, I would go further, and close the river above that point which by common repute does not have what might be called a distinct run of clean fish in the Autumn, before the present date of closing (31st October). Experts could easily decide at what point the river should be divided, to end either in September or October. I fear, however, that Red Tape might intervene, as it is notoriously difficult to get the ancient dates of opening and closing rivers, altered. A new, distinct and separate Fishery Board would probably deal with this.

For the life of me I cannot see why, because a river has been kept open, or closed, to the detriment of the fish, or of sport, for a hundred years, that the date of either opening or closing should remain in statue quo.

It reminds me of a Club I belonged to in the Far East. Shortly after joining, I found that the whisky stocked was very rank and unpleasant, and I spoke

to the Secretary about it. He was furious, and growled out :—

"My dear sir, I have been drinking that whisky in this Club for over twenty years, and if it is good enough for me, it is surely good enough for a very newly joined member."

I made the retort obvious :—

"My very dear sir, if you have been drinking abominably bad whisky in this Club for twenty years, is it any reason why such stuff should be inflicted on members, either new or old, who know whisky when they taste it ?"

The same thing applies to rivers. Heaven send that new Fishery Board soon ! I do not for one moment mean to criticise adversely the present one, but the question of Fisheries is such a large one, and so *enormously important*, that a Board separate from that of Agriculture or any other Department, is a vital need for the conservation and development of two of our greatest national assets—our sea fisheries and our fresh water fisheries.

The Dee is, to my mind, one of the pleasantest rivers in the United Kingdom to fish, although the average size of its salmon is nothing like that of the Tay or other rivers where they run much larger. But personally I would far rather kill a fish of ten pounds in the Dee from the bank, or wading, throwing a fly, than kill one of twenty pounds sitting in a boat on the Tay, while the fly dangles over the stern with a stone on a loose coil of line in the bottom of the craft to strike the fish.

The largest fish I ever killed on the Dee was a red cock fish of twenty-eight pounds in Strath Siven on the Commonty Water, one October, and the smallest I have killed was in the Boat Pool of the

Syndicate Water, Invercauld, weighing four and a half pounds. Donald Morgan was with me when I killed my small one, and said he had not seen a smaller so far as he could remember.

To my mind the Dee is delightful to fish at any season from 11th February to 31st October, when it closes, as at present.

On 11th February, 1886, I killed the first fish of the season on the Culter Water. It was an appalling day; a bitter North East wind. The pool, Peter's Pot, was frozen out from each side for several yards, and in the open part grue coming down very thick. I had no ghillie with me, so had to set to work to break the ice on my side, single-handed. I commenced at the top of Peter's Pot, and after an hour's hard work got my side clear enough to fish. I put on a four inch Ackroyd, and began to cast. I could feel the grue grating on the fly as I moved it. I had not gone far when I was into a heavy kelt, who pulled for what seemed an age. I was using a very light sixteen foot Greenheart, and felt sorry I had not my powerful eighteen foot on the job. Then he woke up and gave me a fine run, and I landed him about the middle of the pool. He was in wonderfully good condition, and as I didn't gaff him, but tailed him, he shoved off quickly again into the black depths. I fished out the pool, and then walked down to the Camp Hill stream. When I reached it, I found my fly frozen to a solid block of ice, and the line frozen to every ring. I sucked the ice off the fly, and with a penknife broke that on the rings, and fished the pool very carefully, but saw nothing. My hands were absolutely numb, and in all my forty years of fishing I never fished on a colder or more bitter day. Fortu-

nately, I had on a jacket of undressed kid, lined with red flannel, which, with trouser waders, kept me warm, except for my hands and feet. I fished, and saw nothing until my return to Peter's Pot, and felt like giving it up. The sporting instinct, however, was too strong: I was loth to go home blank on the first day of the season. It was not to be, after all. I put on a four inch yellow eagle, and determined to search every inch of that pool. When I got down nearly to the tail of it, I got a rug, and off dashed the fish at a piscine express pace up the pool. How merrily the reel rang out in the frosty air! I thought he was clean by the way he ran, and I was right, for ten minutes or so I had on the run a lovely little Spring fish of nine pounds. What a picture he made as he lay on the snow-clad bank, a bar of brilliant silver. I packed him up, had tea at the Station Master's cottage, caught my train, lit my pipe, and thanked God for salmon fishing.

A thing which often puzzles me sorely is the cut-and-dried way in which many men fish. The trap arrives at the water with its occupants at 10 a.m., after a few miles' drive. They fish all day until about 6 p.m., when, sure enough, there is the trap again. The folly of this stereotyped way of fishing I have proved over and over again.

I remember many years ago fishing the Dee in company with two celebrated legal luminaries. They were staying at a house six miles from the water, while I was comfortably ensconced at a farm less than half a mile from the top pool. This being so, I was able to pop down to the water at practically any hour, the net result being that I killed four fish to their one all the time; but the fetish of getting

back in time for dinner was too much for them, and they could not be persuaded to alter their hours. They were excellent company at the waterside, and many an amusing quip and jest they afforded me. Each day they lunched they put their empty square seltzer bottles to build a little cairn, and when they left after three weeks that little cairn was a pyramid of no mean proportions!

One day, the shorter of the two—he was very short—made a false step, and in a second was going down the pool, feet uppermost. I was fishing a hundred yards above, and saw the whole pantomime. The neat little feet were kicking most vigorously. The ghillie was equal to the occasion, and dashed in armed with a huge gaff. "The fun will be furious now," I thought, and rightly. He gaffed the little lawyer by the seat of his waders, and judging by the language which poured forth from the forensic angler in a voluble torrent, it was seriously evident that the wielder of the gaff had included considerably more than waders and breeches in his well-timed effort to help what would very speedily have been a drowning man. The ghillie (I had by this time reached the party) was red with anger at the abuse showered upon him, and only the pleasant jingle, and the gleam of gold emerging from wet pockets for his benefit, could have poured oil on the waters of his angry soul. I may say that although I have heard that—"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," I feel very sure that far uneasier sits the seat that has had a sharp gaff in it, wielded by a strong hand!

I spent a pleasant little holiday, thanks to the late Dr. Farquharson and the late Mr. Nicol of Ballogie, in April, 1888. I fished from the 23rd April

until the 28th, and killed eleven fish, the largest of which was fourteen pounds.

The Commonty Water has five pools—Strath Siven, Jocks Point, the Garden, the Blue Chair and the Boat Pool.

Strath Siven is a very difficult pool to fish, and I once came badly to grief in it. It is full of boulders, often covered with green, slimy moss, and is most difficult to wade—in fact, I think it was the worst pool I ever waded in.

The Garden Pool I liked best of all, because when in order I have nearly always got at least an " offer." It is an unfortunate pool, however, as this year it may be perfect, and next year so silted up as to be hardly worth fishing.

One curious experience I had on that occasion is perhaps worth recording. I had hooked a fish in the Boat Pool, and as he apparently wanted to take me down on to the Blackhall Water, I gave the butt so hard that my top joint (I was using an eighteen foot Greenheart) snapped at the ferrule, and sailed down the line until I felt it bump the fish on the nose. This infuriated the brute to madness, and he led me a pretty dance. It was comical to see the top sailing about like a sort of periscope, indicating the position of the fish wherever it went. After a long run I landed him—fourteen pounds—a lovely Spring fish.

There was a great deal of disease that year, and I gaffed and buried quite a number of fish.

I had most comfortable quarters at the farm at Tillen Teach, and had many an interesting " crack " with old Ross, the farmer, he occupying one chair in the ingle neuk, and I the other, with a great peat fire between us.

One of the finest days of spring fishing which has ever fallen to my lot was on the Glentana Water in 1892, when I landed altogether fifteen fish, the majority of which were clean. The largest was a beauty of twenty-three pounds. It was a glorious Spring day, mild as June, and the country looked lovely. I enjoyed every instant of it, and it was with very tired arms, but much content, that I took leave of Stephen in the evening. The water was in perfect fettle, the wind—beloved of fishers—the S.W., the tackle good, the fish keen the angler even keener. The twenty-three pound fish I killed in the Baron's Pot, and a most thrilling time he gave me. Would I were the age I was then, and had such another lucky day in prospect, but alas! O anno domini!

It is often said that fish will not rise or take during a thunder storm, but on two occasions during my fishing career I have killed fish in these circumstances. The first occasion on which I did so was in May, 1891. I was living in Aberdeen at the time, and Charlie Garthorne, brother of H. W. Kendal, one of the best of sportsmen and companions, was there with his own Company playing in "Bootles' Baby," of which he was the original "Captain Lucy." Whenever he came North I arranged for a day or two's fishing, and on that occasion got a day on the Wood End Water. I think Mr. Farnell Watson was the tenant at the time. We left Aberdeen by the first train for Banchory, and drove to Wood End, a distance of about six miles. We got on to the water at 11 o'clock. Garthorne was particularly anxious to get a fish that day with which to regale his Company at lunch next day in the train on their journey South. He was a capable fisherman, very

keen, but had no luck. We tried every sort of fly we could think of, but in vain. After lunch it grew very sultry, and thunder clouds rolled up. I was becoming desperate, and in my despair put on a half inch Lord Saltoun. I was fishing the Morel Pool at the time. Suddenly, one flash after another almost blinded me, and the hills and rocks resounded with the artillery of heavy thunder. I said to myself, "One more cast." I made it, and to my utter astonishment hooked a fish. I thought at first it must be a late kelt, as no clean fish of any self-respect would so disregard tradition as to take a fly with vivid lightning flashing over the pool. When he threw himself out of the water, however, gleaming in the dark, murky air, I got a shock. He was clean, and apparently a good ten pounds. "Bravo," shouted Charlie, wildly excited. "For Heaven's sake be careful. He is a beauty." He gave me a fine run, and by the time I got him to the gaff the storm had passed over, and the sun was glinting on the soaking heather like a wealth of diamonds. He turned the scale at twelve pounds. The Company had their lunch, and Mrs. Garthorne wrote they had never eaten a better, firmer fish.

Many years ago I was walking by the Glentana Road on the south side of the Dee, and was standing on the high bank overlooking the Laurn Pool, when I spied a reverend gentleman casting away with great vigour. It was evident that he was no great hand at the game, and the spirit of mischief entered into me. I whistled a note to attract his attention, discharging, just as he looked up, a stone about the size of my fist, which by good luck touched his line as it splashed. He didn't see the stone coming, for I was very high above him, and

threw it almost perpendicularly. He struck wildly, feeling sure, no doubt, that the splash was a rise to him, which the touch on the line bore out. I ducked before he could see me, and waited. He fished very vigorously, and I could see his manly form was tense with excitement. (I doubt it he had ever killed a salmon). After arresting him, so to speak, I coo-eed, and got another stone in. He looked up ; splash ! ! the stone went without his seeing it—another rise missed. I tried a third time, but he spotted the stone coming, and I heard a sonorous " Damn ! " floating up to my delighted ears. I met him at some function the following day, and drew him out on the subject of fishing. To hear him talk, he was a sort of Halford, Grey, Maxwell, but when I said I had observed him fishing the other evening, he became very silent. I queried :—

" Had you a ghillie with you ? "

He looked at me suspiciously, and answered in the negative. I shot my last bolt.

" Ah, I quite thought you had, for when you missed your fish, I heard somebody say ' Damn ! ' in no uncertain voice."

That finished him, and he fairly bolted to the tea-tent. (It was a Garden Party.)

While fishing the Commonty Water I had occasion to walk up to Blacklaw's shop (the well-known Rod and Tackle Maker). He was deep in conversation with a man whose face seemed strangely familiar. Gradually I was roped into the conversation, which, of course, was of fishing. He told me he was fishing the Woodend Water, and after purchasing some flies, he left the shop, and Blacklaws asked me :

" Do you know who that is ? "

" No, but his face is very familiar to me."

"That is Lord Randolph Churchill."

I believe he was a first rate fisherman, and very keen.

Blacklaws made the finest Greenheart rods I have ever handled, and it is a great regret that I am not the possessor of one.

Talking of George, who was a stout, plethoric man, he came down for a day on the Commonty Water while I was fishing there. The month was September, I think, and he hooked a fish with prawn in the top pool, Strath Siven. He was wading deep, and as already said, it is a vile pool to wade, and seemed to have got hold of a very devil-possessed fish. It took him down past Jocks Point, through the long rushes to the Garden Pool, out of that and through the Blue Chair Pool, and he got it to the gaff at the top of the Boat Pool. We could not understand it—it was not foul hooked, was hooked inside not outside the mouth, and weighed only fifteen pounds. It certainly was one of the strongest fish for its size which I have ever seen. Poor George was completely done up, and I thought he would have an apoplectic fit. He was purple in the face and perspiring at every pore, for it was an exceptionally hot afternoon.

In October, 1889, I had a couple of very good days. The first day—the 23rd—I had a clean run Autumn fish of twenty-three pounds, and on the second day I fished—the 29th—I had four of sixteen and three quarter pounds, seventeen and a half pounds, nineteen pounds and twenty-five and a quarter pounds. I was staying, as usual, at the farm of Tillen Teach, and carried these four fish up in my large game bag, having no ghillie with me, walking in trouser waders carrying an eighteen foot rod and a five foot gaff. I had had quite enough of it when I dumped the bag down in the farm kitchen.

One day, while at the age of sixteen, I was fishing the Syndicate Water of Invercauld. Two ladies whom I recognised as T.R.H. the Princess Royal and Princess Maud, accompanied, I think, by Major Bigge, came and sat down on the opposite Abergeldie bank, and watched me fishing for a little time. I, of course, raised my cap when I saw them, and was much annoyed I didn't hook a fish. When I came out Donald Morgan, who was ghillieing for me, looked severely at me, and said, more severely still :

" Ye shouldna' ha'e lifted yer cap tae the leddies."

" But why, Donald, surely it was only polite ? "

" Naething o' the kind ; they dinna like tae be bothered wi' sic' things ; they're here for a ***holiday***."

I felt crushed.

I was staying with a friend at Ballater one Autumn, and we had gone for a drive by the north side of the river just below Abergeldie. I spotted an old gentleman who seemed to be in great distress with a fish and was evidently a novice by the way he handled his rod. There was no sign of a ghillie anywhere, and I asked my friend to put me down and wait for me while I helped to land the fish. As he saw me coming he shouted :

" For goodness sake help me. It is my first salmon, and Donald has gone to the pool above to get the flask, which we left in the heather where we lunched."

I directed his procedure, and eventually gaffed the fish for him—a nice one of ten pounds, although rather red.

" My first salmon ; I have done it ; I have landed a salmon," he shouted, and throwing his arms round me, he hugged me like a bear.

"Oh, my boy, *think* if I had lost it. But I haven't. Isn't it a perfect beauty?"

Such enthusiasm in a man well over sixty was delightful to see, and says more for the tremendous fascination of the sport than any words I can pen.

After he had cooled down, never for a single second taking his eye off the fish, for he was fairly entranced, he asked if I fished, and on receiving my reply in the affirmative, he told me that he had the beat for a month, and I must come with him every day. I spent many pleasant days in his company, and killed many fish.

One morning, nearly at the end of his tenancy, I had gone over to his house to see what time he was going to start for the water, and found him looking very pale and anxious.

"No, I won't come up to the water to-day. I am not feeling well. I feel quite sure some disaster is going to happen to me. I cannot tell you why, but I am sure of it, and I must remain at home to-day in case anything happens. But you go up, my boy."

I drove up, accompanied by Donald Morgan, and killed either two or three fish—I forget which. In the evening I went, of course, to enquire for my friend, and found him very depressed.

"I do hope your forboding was incorrect, and that nothing has happened."

For answer he handed me a wire, which read :—

"Great destruction to works by floods."

He estimated the damage at some thousands. An extraordinary case of prescience, I suppose; but he assured me that until the morning when I first called, he had had no idea of anything likely to befall him. Anyway, he went South at once, and I fished out his last week for him.

CHAPTER IV

A summer Salmon—An irate Colonel—The Ghillie and the ladies—Teaching a cad a lesson—A day on the Invercauld water—A big fish.

To say that it is the unexpected which happens is nowhere so well exemplified as in fishing. Apropos of this, I was at a "loose end" one bright, sunny, frosty September morning at Aboyne. There had been a very hard frost early, succeeded by a brassy sun, and brilliant blue sky flecked with white, and with the water as it was, so low and clear, one could not well imagine a worse fishing day. I took my fourteen foot Castle Connel rod and my long gaff, and went down to the Red Rock to fish pour passer le temps, not from any wild idea of catching fish. I stuck my gaff in the sand at the neck of the pool, put up a tiny silver doctor, waded in and commenced to fish. The Red Rock is a deep pool and always had fish in it, but I never dreamt of touching one on such a day. It was 10 a.m. and getting hotter and hotter, and I was half-way down the pool, when I got a rug which almost dipped the point of the little rod. The reel shrieked "The Deil Amang the Tailors," the line fairly swished through the water, for the fish made the pool "boil." Straight up out of the pool he went to the next pool, his back well

out of the water, for on this shallow between the pools it was only about 9 inches deep, so low was the water. The current was too much for him, and he slowly turned his bulky form and then went sixty miles an hour down into the pool again. He was evidently much annoyed, for he sulked for at least ten minutes, in spite of thrills communicated by tapping on the rod, and a wild fusilade of pebbles. By this time I had collected my thoughts a bit, and felt what a fool I had been not to snatch the gaff out of the sand as I passed it when the fish went up to the neck of the pool. It was now yards away, and he didn't seem like going up again. The last pebble galvanised him into life, and off he went seawards at a fearful pace, the little rod as clay in the hands of the potter. I had very little power over him, for as I had seen when he went up the shallows, he was a big fish. I thought he was going to leave the pool and go down still further, but he turned and came up, never, however, going high enough to let me get within reach of the gaff. Then he started again, came to the surface, jigged furiously, rolled over in an attempt to break the line, jumped high out of the water, and then showed signs of weakening. I gradually steered him into a little bay at the tail of the pool, and cautiously waded in, literally falling upon him, and clutched him in my arms like a big baby. I waded out and dumped him on the head with a stone. I didn't fish on, as I was very tired and perspiring freely, for the sun was hotter than ever. I weighed him when I got him home about a quarter of an hour later, and he turned the scale at twenty pounds exactly—a fine cock fish, if rather red. I got Mrs. Harper to kipper him for me, and very good eating he made.

I often had quite excellent sport in July, August and September, killing fish when apparently no one else was trying to, or could not do so.

I remember an old Colonel staying at the hotel waxing very eloquent on the subject of the young cub who killed fish when "I could not, dammit, and I have fished all my life," and hinted at other and sinister methods of killing fish than with the orthodox rod and line. However, he came down one day while I was fishing, and, incidentally, killing fish, saw that I was using a very light fourteen foot rod, very fine gut, and very small double iron flies, little bigger than trout flies. Having seen the method, and rather wondered at it, he afterwards became as successful as I was.

Here I recall a conversation with Mc—— (the ghillie's real name wild horses would not drag from me). Certain ladies were fishing a beat I knew, and I had often admired them. They were beautiful girls, of great liveliness, and out of pure fun they flirted terribly with Mc——, who was positively terrified of them, and his hair stood on end at their wild sayings and doings. One day I said to him:

"Well, how are your ladies getting on?"

"I'm juist thanking God I'm a mairrit man," said the stalwart ghillie viciously, and was seriously annoyed at my ribald laughter.

One August I had marked a biggish fish in a pool, and went down late one evening to see if I could get him. I had got about half way down the pool when out of the wood on the opposite bank stepped another fisherman. He deliberately waded in in front of me and began to fish. This breach of courtesy and angling etiquette made me furious. I told him of the enormity he was committing, and

received the reply that he had the proprietor's permission to fish, and fish he would ***when*** and *how* he liked—this in an arrogant tone. I waded out, sat down, searched my fly book, and finding a huge six inch Gordon, which Sandy Ingram had dressed for me some years before, and with which I had killed several fish, (these large irons are very seldom used now-a-days), knotted it on a treble cast, and got well out into the stream. My enemy was wading fairly deep, without waders. I got my line well over him, and when I thought the fly was near him struck as hard as I could. Up went his legs, and head first he went into the water, with a wild yell as his head disappeared below the surface. I may say here that I would not have risked it if he had had waders on. I gave him the butt very hard as he came up, using the most appalling language. He got on his feet, and reached for the line to break it, but before he could get hold of it I gave another mighty strike, and as the stones were mossy and slippery as glass, over he went again. Thinking I had now given him enough to reflect upon, I broke the line and let him go. He danced on the bank and yelled anathemas at me until the air was purple, then he very wisely went home. Having cooled down somewhat and rested the pool, I commenced fishing again. I killed the fish—a red cock of about fourteen pounds —with a little double white wing. I never met that angler again.

One day a friend of mine, who had a beat on the Invercauld Water above Ballater, asked me to take his place, as he had to go to Aberdeen on business.

I rose at 6 a.m., and scanned the "glass" and the weather. It was a typical Autumn day—blusteringly windy, with a nice grey sky—in fact, a grand

day for a fish if the wind didn't get beyond bounds. I was hurriedly discussing my breakfast when I heard old James Inglis' voice at the door, and went to greet him and enquire what my prospects were.

"Weel, sir," he said, "it's a gran' day and weel ha'e ae tail i' the bag, if no' twa afore even."

This was good hearing, so I despatched him with the tackle down to the Square to take a couple of seats in the coach by which we were to go up to the water. Old Connon handled the ribbons and four spanking bays were chafing to be off. Presently the ostler let go, and away we went at a brisk eight miles an hour, up the Darroch Brae, past Coil-a-creich, and then to Abergeldie. James told Connon to drop us at the Fir Park Pool just above Abergeldie Castle, and by 10-45 I was ready to step into the water. The colour of the water was just right—a deep amber tone that showed up the little "Blue Charm" to perfection. I waded into the top of the pool, and cautiously got my fly in at the far side of the stream. As it lit on the water and disappeared I could have sworn I saw a boil, but got no rug, and fished on. Twice I fished over that place, and got no result. I tried a third time, then I got a rug, which made my heart "loup," as James would have said, and a great red cock fish threw himself right into the air, showing the "Blue Charm" apparently well fixed in his lower jaw. Bang down stream he went, tearing out the line at a furious rate. The reel skirled a merry pibroch, and I tore after him as fast as long waders, and a round pebbly river bottom permitted. It was not easy going, for the summer moss was still on the stones, and they were very slippery. He tore straight down stream without a second's halt, out of the pool on to the shallow

run below, and into the Telegraph Pool, where he ran out every inch of line, and bang went everything —he was gone ! My reader will know exactly what I said, so I will save time and continue the story. James had a few " wordies " to say on the subject too.

I came out, and we had a suspicion of " Encore." I retraced my steps and we had a Council of War at the hut door opposite the Fir Park, to which we had gone back. James was for a Jock Scott, which he always looked upon as a card to play when in doubt, but although I have fished for nearly forty years for salmon, and often tried Jock Scott of all sizes and under all conditions, I never yet killed a fish with it. This, I know, sounds very heterodox, as it has always been one of the most popular standard flies with most sportsmen. It seemed to me it was " Blue Charm's " day, and " Blue Charm " they should have. I went over the pool again, but saw nothing. James was rather disgusted, as he quite expected I should have a fish with fly in the Fir Park, and recommended me to go out and smoke a pipe while he put up a gudgeon. In a few minutes I was at it again, the gudgeon spinning beautifully, and very tempting it looked glinting in and out of the amber depths. Half way down the pool I got into and landed a small hen fish.

We then walked down to the Telegraph Pool. It is rather a nasty pool to fish from the north side, as the telegraph wires are unpleasantly close at one's back, and it has a bottom rather like a quarry hole, full of rough, slippery boulders, which cause one to play a sort of " Jack-in-the-Box " game, now up, now down, and I am afraid I gave it but a sorry doing, as it is not a pool I am fond of, and I saw nothing in it.

On, then, to the Bridge Pool opposite the Castle, which is a good pool, but the wire suspension bridge across the upper third rather spoils it, and it wants a fairly long line as the fish lie well over to the Abergeldie side. Here I tried a "Blue Charm," "Childers" and a gudgeon, but saw nothing.

Next to Little Ann, which was also blank, as was Ann Fhuile. I saw nothing in the Red Brae, and then came down to Corbieha', and here we sat down to eat our lunch.

As I stretched my legs to rise, splash! went a great red monster with a snout like a hatpeg.

"My!" exclaimed James, "yon's a big yin doun by the Red Rock."

I started off again, and just as I came opposite the rock in question and my fly was drifting round gently, there was a great surging boil in the water, and I was fast in the "big yin." Burr-r-r! went the reel, and away went the fish, rolling on the top of the water, and then pelting helter-skelter down stream for all he was worth. I could not get out on to the bank, unfortunately, as the water, quite two feet deep, ran right to the fringe of brushwood which skirted the side of the pool, so I floundered on over slimy stones towards the foot of the pool. The fish presently stopped and went to the bottom, and sulked. I could feel him working his way up stream close-nosed on the rocks below, rubbing as hard as he could to work the hook out. Finding his best effort to do so futile, he came to the surface again and started jigging. Still the hook held, and mad with rage he made a grand rush up stream, cleaving the water near the surface with his great tail for all the world like a torpedo boat. Up, up, he went, until he met the strong water at the head

of the pool, and now, exhausted by the long strain, he gave in slightly, and I reeled in hard, pulling him down stream towards me. I extended the gaff, ready to take a chance when it offered, but the fish saw me, and the glint of the sun on the polished steel of the gaff, and made another wild rush down stream, taking about forty yards of line straight off. Exhausted by this burst he lay on the surface, struggling feebly with his tail to smash the cast, but I reeled in quickly, and as his broad shoulder came towards me, got the gaff over it and brought it "home."

"Over five-and-twenty, and no' sae verra reed," was James' comment.

Putting him on the balance the fish just touched twenty-eight pounds—a grand old cock fish, and, as James said, not so very red.

Time was passing all too quickly, so I skipped the two succeeding pools, and went to the Kunyoch. This is a grand holding pool from the top to the last foot of it. I fished it first with a "Childers" and then a "Thunder and Lightning." The old cock had so mauled my only sizeable "Blue Charm" as to make its use risky, but as it seemed to be the only fly which was doing anything, I put it on again, and I never saw a "Blue Charm" look more syren-like than on this occasion, as I drew it past me in the water to see if it was hanging correctly. At the fourth cast I was in for a fish again. He was no sooner hooked than lost.

I continued, and in a few more casts the same thing happened, so I reeled up to look at the fly. It was a double iron, and there was one hook missing, so I concluded that the first fish hooked in this pool had broken it, and the second fish had only touched the barbless iron, and, of course, was lost. With a

file I cut off the barbless iron and tried the fly in the water again, and although it did not hang so well it nevertheless proved enticing enough to give me a third tail in the bag. James, whose sharp, eagle eye was ever scanning the pool, told me he saw a fish rising head and tail a few yards above where I was fishing, so I came out, went up a few yards, and began again.

At the very spot he indicated I was "fast" again. This fish proved to be a very clean run hen fish, and a fine dance she led me. I had thirty minutes of hard labour up and down the bank before she yielded a chance to gaff her, and as I flung her ashore the hook fell out and she got off the gaff, out James threw himself on the top of her with the quickness of a hawk, grasped her gills and tail, and with a mighty heave sped her into the gorse above—a bonny fish of fifteen pounds.

Another sandwich, and we hurried over the fields to the high road, where we heard the "rumble" of the coach, and so to Ballater.

Is there any day quite like a late September day on the bonny Dee, when the red-gold harvest sun just begins to set over the gently-waving birches to the tune of the soft murmur of the stream below.

CHAPTER V

A week on the Dess water—The whisky pig—The last day of it—The lark's nest.

EARLY one May I went up to Aberdeen for a little fishing, and after a somewhat futile week on the Don killing a few trout, I got a chance, through the tenant leaving before his time was up, of taking the upper Dess Water from May 25th to 31st, at a rate within reach of my purse.

I went to Aboyne on the Saturday, and spent Sunday there, but being anxious to live right on the water, the advantages of which are obvious, I walked down on Sunday morning by the side of the Tarland Burn, in which, by the way, I have killed many good trout in my time, crossed it before its junction with the Dee, and through the beautiful Bell Wood until I came to the Bell Wood Farm. I interviewed the farmer's wife, Mrs. Ellis, who gave me a point-blank "No," as she said she had no servant, and with young children going to school in the morning and a great deal of farm work to be done, it was quite impossible for her to take in a lodger. This was a sad blow, as it was the only farm within easy reach of the river. I explained to her that I wanted little waiting on, and would even make my own bed and cook my own food, if required, but that coming

to stay I undoubtedly was the very next day! This took the good lady's breath away, but she ultimately consented, and I drove down the same evening and put up there. I had a very comfortable sitting-room and a good bedroom. I asked if I might have a hot water bottle in my bed, as having been for some years in the East, I felt the cold, for, although it was May, there was a keen bite in the air. Mrs. Ellis kindly promised that ' a jar " should be put in the bed. At 11 o'clock I went upstairs, and after undressing blew out the candle, leapt into bed and nearly broke all my toes upon a monstrous large and hard object, I got out extremely pained, and inclined to say things, lit my candle, and founda large and monstrous hard object—it was a huge five gallon whisky " pig " which nearly filled the bed ! !

I was up at 7 o'clock on the Monday, and went down to the river. There was a frosty air, bright sun, cloudless sky—in fact, about the worst fishing day you could well imagine. I fished the Red Brae and the Bell Wood Pool, but saw nothing. Climbing up the steep bank above the latter Pool to walk to the Quithel, and looking down on the river, I could see every stone in the water and every fish, and there seemed to be about a dozen of them, some up to twenty pounds, as far as I could judge.

" It is something to know the fish are there," I thought. I reached the Quithel and commenced at the neck, as I thought at this time of the year the fish might be fairly high up. I got into a fish halfway down the pool, and after a good run landed him—eight pounds—a pretty, clean run Spring fish. I got nothing more that day, and at 8 p.m. went home to the farm, where I had a delicious dinner

of Scotch broth, chicken, and curds and cream. After that a cup of tea, as coffee was not available, one Ramon Allones, a long read of Calderwood's delightful book on Scotch Rivers, and "so to bed."

I could see it was no use fishing between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., so I made a practice of going out about 7.30, finishing at 11, came up to the farm to get the mail and the newspaper, ate an early lunch, had an hour's sleep, a good tea, and then to the water at half-past six, fishing as long as I could see.

On the 26th I killed a nice little fish of nine and three quarters pounds, and on the 27th and 28th did nothing.

On the 29th I killed a fish of eight and a half pounds, and a sea-trout of two and a half pounds.

I was leaving on the 30th to pay a visit further North, and was very anxious to get a fish to take with me. I was out betimes, and tried several flies, but without a rug. I had three prawns in a bottle with me, last season's too, and mounting one I was quickly into a fish in the Lower Bell Wood, and after a short run landed him—eight and three quarters pounds. I then tried the upper part of the Pool, where I hooked another, who gave me rather a bad time, taking me right to the foot of the pool—a long one—where I gaffed him out—seven and three quarters pounds. At this moment Mrs. Ellis' little girl appeared and told me the trap was waiting to take me to the Dess Station, and that I would have to hurry or I should miss the train. It was a most pleasant week—the glorious scenery, the champagne of the air, the music of the river, the sunshine, the kindly folk at the farm, the simple but luxurious riot of cream, butter, scones and oat-cakes, the walk home in the gloaming, all made

up my tale of great contentment, coupled with some favourite books, a few good Havanas, a couple of well-seasoned pipes, a little A 1 whisky, a pound of my special China tea—my cup was full! I forgot my cares and worries for the space of a week, and felt refreshed, mentally, morally, physically.

One thing I remember which interested me greatly, and that was a lark whose nest was in the heather by the path leading from the Bell Wood to the Quithel Pool Whenever she saw me coming she hopped off the nest and limped away very lame, to distract my attention from her home This engaging pantomime happened every day I was there. She hirpled very well, and it was amusing to see the anxious look she gave me each time I came near the nest.

CHAPTER VI

A holiday on Royal waters—The first fish—Small flies—The Olga fly—Grilled salmon steak—Fish hooked during lightning flash—A wintry day—A day in the Ballochbuie—First fish of the day—Hurriedly packing the fish—Mrs. Begg as a worker.

In May and June of 1916 I experienced one of the most enjoyable holidays in the whole of my forty years' experience in fishing. I received the gracious permission of His Majesty the King to spend a holiday of three weeks on the Balmoral Waters.

For several days before leaving for the North I spent long evenings going over my tackle with that joy and delight only known to the keen fisherman. I dreamt of green hills and frowning mountains, of glorious birch and pine woods, and green, mossy banks. I could hear my beloved Dee murmuring over the stones with its musical invitation to come and live on its banks for a time and taste the sweets of Nature at its best, in the Spring, when there is that ethereal green leafage which later takes darker and less delicate hue. I thought of fish, I dreamt of fish, and I talked of fish.

My wife and I left Euston on the morning of the 13th May at 9 o'clock, and reached Aberdeen at 1 o'clock the next morning. Truly a tiring journey, but as we passed river after river until we finally

ARTHUR GRANT, Head Gamekeeper to H.M. The King, Balmoral.

Photo by Bisset, Ballater.

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crossed the Dee at Ferry Hill, it was full of interest. One noted keenly the size and colour of every burn and river we crossed, and conjured up visions of auspicious happenings that were to come within the next few days.

We spent the Sunday in Aberdeen to rest after the journey, and early on Monday morning I spent an interesting hour in my favourite tackle shops. Mr. John Michie, the King's representative at Balmoral, had kindly arranged quarters for us at a farm on the Abergeldie Castle Estate, not far from the river, and he mentioned in notifying me of this that Lundy, the Birkhall Keeper, would meet us the next day on the arrival of the train at Ballater. By the time we had got into our carriage in the fine new Station of which Aberdeen is now the proud possessor, I was as excited as any schoolboy of fifteen.

Our first glimpse of the river after leaving Aberdeen was at Cults, again just before reaching Banchory, and then we passed inland until just before reaching Dinnet we got another brief glimpse of the river, skirting the edge of the beautiful Moor of Dinnet, then Cambus o' May, with its pretty birch-clad river bank, a little spoilt, I think, by the utilitarian suspension bridge put up in recent years. On again once more until we glided into Ballater Station, of happy memories in the past. Lundy was on the platform waiting for us, and after collecting the baggage he went to procure a carriage to take us to Little Mill. While waiting for the trap I observed there was a great deal of snow on the neighbouring hills, and especially on Loch Nagar, on the top of which, by the way, I once had a snow ball fight in mid-August in my younger days. Presently Lundy

returned with the carriage. On the way through the village we made a halt at Smith the Saddler's, as there were one or two flies I wanted. Up to the last moment of going fishing it is extraordinary how one can go on getting little extras of all kinds, where the slightest excuse or opportunity offers. I laid in a supply of fish basses, which my wife seemed to think rather tempting Providence, as the fish were still in the water!

It is a beautiful drive up the south side past Braikley, over the Bridge of Muick, up the Braes of Knock, and through splendid woods of giant firs and larches most of the way, until at length the Little Mill, nestling by the Bridge over the Girnoch, comes in view. Mrs. Begg, having heard the carriage coming, was on the doorstep to greet us. Lundy enquired whether I intended to fish that day, and I said:

"Oh, yes, of course I do. We will just have something to eat and then drive back to the Long Pool at the foot of the water and fish up home."

With such a prospect in view lunch was not long in being despatched, and we then drove down to the Manse, where we left the trap, and went down to the riverside.

The Long Pool is the lowest pool on the Estate of Birkhall. It does not belie its name, as it is an extremely long pool, and to fish it thoroughly occupies much time. I had a talk with Lundy, who said that at the moment there were very few fish up, although it was so late in the Spring season, and this he put down to the hard winter and long-continued low temperature of the water. On the Dee, if there is a hard, long-continued winter, the lower proprietors score heavily, the fish not running

through their waters; but if it is an open Spring with plenty of water, the fish run through the lower reaches, and the middle and upper reaches are, of course, the best. What Lundy said was rather a damper, as one naturally thought that so late in May the pools would be teeming with fish.

He put up my rod—a sixteen foot Hardy special split cane with steel centre—and I put on a two inch Akroyd and waded in. However, I neither saw a fish move, nor did I get an "offer." Then I came out and had a pipe and another chat.

"I think, sir, you would find a much smaller fly is a better chance for a fish."

But I said:—

"It is a much smaller fly I am using, than I used to do with this size of water in the Spring, and especially as the water is so cold."

"Well, sir, we have had a fish or two, but they have all been on very small flies, smaller than I have known before for this season of the year."

I put on a small double silver Teal, or as som call it "Silver Blue." I was about half-way down the pool when I got the rug which gave me a moment's palpitation. The fish very soon showed what he was by a high leap out of the water—as pretty a little Spring fish as ever I saw, about six pounds, or seven pounds I thought. I had an excellent run, and eventually brought him to the gaff, which Lundy handled very dexterously.

It is a curious thing that although I had been married fifteen years, and had been fishing more or less every year during that period, my wife had never seen me kill a fish—in fact, she was quite convinced that she brought me bad luck. If I killed a fish it was just after she left me, or just before she came

down to the water, but until I landed this fish she had never actually seen me kill one, and when I told her of the projected trip to Scotland, I had the greatest difficulty in inducing her to come with me, as she felt quite sure I should have no luck if she did. As will be seen, the next few weeks quite upset this theory.

After leaving the Long Pool, we next came to the Jetties, which it was impossible to fish as the water was so high it was a straight run through. I should say here that the water was very much higher than usual for the time of year, and was as clear as the water of a chalk stream—hence, I suppose, the reason for the fish taking such tiny flies.

We walked on through the woods to Pol Vheir and Little Pol Vheir. Here again the river was too high, as these pools, with the exception of a yard or two at the foot of Pol Vheir, are at their most fishable size when the river is in medium or small volume. We rested here, and then I tried a small fly over the short pool called the "Floating Bank" —so called because in the days when the giants of the forest were felled, they were rafted down the Dee to Aberdeen and this was the starting point. The water here again was rather high, and although I tried two flies I saw nothing.

The next Pool—Streams of Gairn—also rather high, yielded nothing.

We now had a longish walk to one of my favourite pools—the Newton. Some years there is a good lie on the Birkhall side at the tail of the Pool, but this year the fish were all lying on the opposite side, and as it is a very broad and rapid stream, it was most difficult to reach them, and when reached, to let the fly lie over the fish long enough to give

them a chance of taking, or even of seeing it. I tried a " Blue Charm " here, but again drew a blank.

We now moved up to the Boat Pool, one of the best holding pools on this beat, and the last, or top pool on the Birkhall Water. Unfortunately, this also proved blank, but Lundy consoled me by telling me that given the sun, the warmer water would bring the fish up with a rush.

I fished the Birkhall beat again the next day—the 16th—and only got one fish—seven and a half pounds.

On the 17th I killed only one fish, and this I got in the Newton, eight and a half pounds, with a fly of my own design called the " Olga." As I have been very successful with this fly I give the dressing here :—

Tag	...	Flat silver tinsel.
Tail	...	Golden pheasant.
Body	...	Light blue wool.
Ribbing	...	Flat silver tinsel.
Hackle	...	Blue one shade darker than the body.
Wings	...	Turkey or Bustard

On the 18th I killed a fish of nine pounds, with the " Blue Charm."

In the Boat Pool on the 21st I killed a fish of eight and a half pounds and a trout of one pound.

On the 23rd I fished the Boat Pool first, but saw nothing, and came down to the Newton. It was very difficult wading as the stream on my side was extremely strong and it was no easy task to balance oneself. I put up a small " Silver Blue " double iron, summer grilse size. The fly, just as it dropped on the water, at the far side of the pool, was seized, and owing to the tremendous strain upon the line,

owing to the rapid stream, I got a rug which indicated a very much bigger fish than it turned out to be; A very lively little beggar he proved to be, and weighed nine and a half pounds when Lundy gaffed him out. I came out and rested the pool for a few minutes while I smoked a pipe, and then commenced at the top once more. Very much higher up than one would have expected at this season, with such cold water, I got another terrific rug, evidently from a heavy fish, which ran straight to the bottom of the pool without a stop, and then, fortunately for me, halted, as it would have been quite impossible to follow him. After pausing for a few minutes—one could hardly call it sulking, it was so brief—he went straight with one wild run to the top of the pool, which showed that he was an immensely strong fish, and as I had not seen him, had hopes of something over twenty pounds. He ran backwards and forwards like this for about ten minutes, but the heavy stream soon told upon him, and presently he was gaffed—eighteen pounds—a perfect picture of a clean run cock Spring fish.

I fished out the day, ending up at the Long Pool, but saw nothing more. We had a very pleasant drive back in the gloaming to the farm, where we found a great welcome in a fire of fir logs, which lit up the little drawing-room. One of the fish was promptly turned into steaks which were grilled to a turn by Lizzie Begg, who was a most excellent cook. After dinner, pleasantly tired, we sat and read by the cheery fire, and I enjoyed a post prandial cigar. We went early to bed, to rise again early the following day.

Next morning, about 9 o'clock, Lundy arrived, and we walked through the woods, past the little

saw mill which belonged to the Farm, to the Douchels Pool. Here again the fish, unfortunately, lay off to the other side, which meant deep wading and long casting. I put on a little double "Green Teal", and when half way down the pool I killed a fish of ten pounds, in perfect condition.

Jocks Point—the next Pool below—was too high to fish, and so we went on to the Shenval. Again here the fish lay well to the other side, although sometimes there is a lie to the Abergeldie side unless the pool has got silted up, which this year it had, so that again I had to wade very deep and fish the longest line I could throw in order to get anywhere near the fish. I changed my "Green Teal" for a "Blue Charm" and killed a fish of ten pounds.

On the 25th I killed a fish of ten pounds with the "Blue Charm" in the Boat Pool, and one of nine and a half pounds in the Newton. This latter fish I killed with a gudgeon.

On the 26th we drove down in the morning to the Long Pool, where I killed a nice fish of eight and a half pounds with a "Grey Clunie," and coming back towards home I killed one of eight and a half pounds again with a "Blue Charm" in the Boat Pool, but saw nothing in the intervening pools.

On the 27th I had a very pleasant day. It was very much warmer, and when we got down to the Long Pool it was evident that the fish had arrived, as I could see a good many rising which I had not seen before in any of the Pools—in fact, until this date I don't think I saw half a dozen fish rise, except those which I killed. I killed a fish of six and a half pounds with the "Blue Charm" in the Long Pool, and then killed nothing between that and the New-

ton, where I killed the smallest salmon which I have ever killed, with the exception of the one mentioned before, of the same weight, and I should think one of the smallest which has been heard of in the history of the Dee. It was a true salmon, and only weighed four and a half pounds, although in perfect condition, and its length and girth corresponded well to its weight. I got this fish with a "Silver Teal."

We had lunch in the hut at the Boat Pool, amidst the most charming surroundings. There was a ploughman's cottage close by the bridge over the Boat Pool, and this man's wife very kindly gave us tea several times, which was most welcome after a long walk and hard day's fishing.

After lunch the sky grew very dark and thunder clouds rolled up. I tried another fly over the pool, but without success, and thought I would try what a prawn would do; Mounting a prawn I walked down from the hut to the top of the pool. It is a very difficult pool to fish with prawn, as there are so many rocks, and you are very apt to catch your bait in the bottom. The thunder now began to roll up in the distance, and got louder and louder. Faint flashes of lightning became visible, but still I fished on, although I feared it was of little use. As my prawn was half-way to the finish of the cast a brilliant flash of lightning almost blinded me, and at that moment, to my immense astonishment, a fish seized the prawn and dashed off gaily down the pool. I gave him very short shrift, as it was now pouring in torrents, and the lightning was becoming rather unpleasant, so I got him to the gaff as quickly as possible, and Lundy carried him up to the hut, where we weighed him—eight and a half pounds.

The weather now became so bad that to fish on was impossible, and we walked back to the farm where we arrived rather like drowned rats, and very glad to get under shelter.

On the 29th in the Boat Pool I killed another small fish of five and a half pounds, also one of the smallest true salmon I have ever caught. It was a very blustering day, cold, and with a good deal of driving rain and sleet, and the river rose considerably. It was so unpleasant that I determined to go home and come down later in the evening if the weather improved. I told Lundy to go home, but that I might possibly take a cast by myself in the evening if the conditions were better.

The weather cleared up, and after dinner I said I thought I would walk as far as the Boat Pool, which was about a mile away from the farm, and have a last cast. I put up a small "Silver Teal," and killed a fish of nine pounds. The weather broke again, and we had torrents of rain. However, as we had started we thought we were so wet we might as well continue to fish. After fishing the Boat Pool we went down to the Newton, where I killed a fish of seven and a half pounds with a small "Blue Charm." It was extremely cold, and we both had on very thick clothing, and I know that by the time we reached the farm with trouser waders, heavy brogues, a fish bag containing sixteen and a half pounds of fish, two rods and a couple of tackle cases, we were very thankful to sit down. This may seem rather silly, but I had, of course, been leading a very sedentary life for the previous year, and was not really yet in very fit training for strenuous exertion.

On the 30th the water was very high, but I managed to kill one fish, six and a half pounds, with a

brown phantom minnow in the Newton Pool, and lost one more.

The following day I had made arrangements with Mr. Michie to fish the Ballochbuie beat. The trap came round at 8 o'clock and we started off. It is an extremely beautiful drive from Little Mill up the south side to Balmoral, being for the most part through pine woods, past the stately old pile of Abergeldie Castle, with its rugged picturesque architecture. We crossed the Bridge of Balmoral and went up the north side as we were to meet McIntosh, the keeper, at the old bridge across the Dee which leads to the Falls of Garrawalt. To my mind the prettiest piece of scenery on the whole of Dee-side lies from that point where stand two stone pillars just by Inver Inn up to the bridge which crosses the road again leading to Braemar. The river for the most part here is of a much more rocky and tumbling character than anywhere between this point and the sea, with the exception of Cairnton. The air was like champagne. I think the Dee-side air is the finest in the whole world, most health giving.

It was a fine day with bright sunshine, but rather a chilly wind. We found McIntosh waiting for us by the Lodge which leads to the bridge, and on leaving the trap proceeded down to the river. We told our coachman to wait, as we intended to fish a pool or two from the Bridge down, and then, returning to the carriage, drive a little further down before commencing again. My wife took a snapshot of myself and McIntosh before I commenced to fish, which turned out rather a good photograph. She took a good many snapshots during our visit, and had them enlarged for me, and they now adorn my

study—an ever-pleasing reminder of that delightful holiday.

I commenced at the old Bridge Pool with a "Silver Teal," and when half-way down, hooked a fish which, after a delightful run of about twelve or fifteen minutes, I landed.

In the next Pool, the Benuich, I saw nothing, and we then came down to the now much damaged wooden bridge. Below this bridge there is a charming little Pool, basin-like in shape, and a most likely place. I tried three flies over this Pool, and got nothing. I then tried a prawn, and scarcely had it touched the water when a small fish seized it, and dashed off down the Pool. A livelier fish for its size I cannot remember having killed, and it gave me a good deal of trouble before I landed it. Putting on a fresh prawn I went over the Pool once more, and killed another fish of eight pounds. McIntosh then went up to his house, to fetch something he had forgotten.

While he was away I tried a third prawn and hooked a good fish. The gaff was lying high up the bank where McIntosh had left it, and my wife was unable to bring it to me quickly enough. I had the fish in quite shallow water at my feet, but not sufficiently near to tail him, although I could have reached him with a long gaff, and after one or two heavy fits of jigging, he got off, much to my disgust.

MacIntosh arrived on the scene once more, and I tried another prawn, and killed a fish almost immediately, of seven and a half pounds. I never saw fish rush at the prawn with such avidity; all the inhabitants of the Pool seemed to be out for prawn that morning.

It happened to be a Saturday, and I was very

anxious to send the fish South by the coach, so we crossed the wooden bridge, and immediately sat down to sew the fish up in their basses. I told our coachman, who had arrived from the upper bridge, to stop the motor as it passed. We had just got the last fish sewn up and labelled when the car arrived, and I was able to despatch the fish, which would reach London on Monday.

We then came down to the Garlinn Pool, but saw nothing there, then on to McLaren's Pool, which is a favourite with all who fish these waters. It is a long Pool, and a holding Pool.

I waded in, and commenced with a small "Silver Blue," and when less than half-way down, got into a fish which gave me a good deal of trouble, but which I eventually landed. I only killed one more fish that day, but it was the best day's sport that I had on the Balmoral waters, and was a most enjoyable one.

As we passed the Inn at Inver, we stopped there to have tea, and thoroughly enjoyed the delicious scones, butter and black currant jam which they placed before us.

It was now getting late in the afternoon, and unless McIntosh could catch the up-going motor he would have a very long walk home, so I told him that we would not fish longer. We had a delightful drive home in the cool of the evening, and arrived once more at Little Mill, sunburnt, and well satisfied with a most enjoyable day.

This was one of the most delightful holidays I have ever had. The fishing was first rate, our quarters most comfortable, the feeding and attendance everything that could be desired, the keepers most attentive in every way. Mrs. Begg, who looked

after us, was the hardest worker I have ever known ; up with the dawn, she slaved from morning till late at night. One evening at 9 p.m., we were returning from the river and found her weeding the drive up to the house. I said to her, " This is absurd, you have been working all day, and here you are at nine o'clock at night weeding the drive of all things, I know what will happen to you at the Resurrection Day, when the call comes, you will say in a wheedling tone, ' Bide a wee angel, I've a jobbie tae finish ! ' " The dear old lady had a hearty laugh and said she didn't work so hard or so late as all that. She and her daughters—Lizzie and Charlotte—were unremitting in their kindly attention to our wants.

CHAPTER VII

A beat on Invercauld in October—A blizzard to begin with—A thirty pounder for his first fish—A selfish General—The Morven water—A fish in little Hell.

In the Autumn of 1916 a friend and I, whom I shall call " George," took a beat on the Invercauld water for the last fortnight of October. I arrived at Ballater on the Saturday, and we were to commence fishing on the Monday. I took rooms for us both, and also engaged Donald Morgan for myself and another ghillie—Sandy Anderson—for my friend. On Sunday I had a long walk by the riverside with Donald in the morning, and in the afternoon a terrific blizzard came down. It was most desperately cold, and before going to bed I felt extremely unwell. I was afraid that an attack of ague was coming on, and told my landlady that I would go to bed at once. I had scarcely got into bed when my teeth began to chatter, and I shook until the bed rattled again. My landlady, coming in to see how I was, found me in this unpleasant condition, and got plenty of hot water bottles and some hot whisky and water, which she administered, and in a short time I got into that pleasant stage—the hot stage—and sweated most profusely, and felt evry comfortable, if somewhat weak.

George was to arrive next day, and I didn't go out to fish, as I felt too unwell. He came by the afternoon train, and we had a pleasant evening together talking over prospects of our sport and looking over tackle, etc. The following day we fished the lower beat, and part of the middle beat. It was very cold and the river was very high. I killed five fish that day—six pounds, two of eight pounds each, ten pounds and thirteen pounds, some with the " Olga " fly and some with dace.

On the 16th I only killed one fish.

On the 18th the only thing which was of any use, as the water was almost inky in colour, was a " Blue Phantom." I killed two fish in Corbieha' Pool—one of them twenty pounds, an old red cock, who gave me a desperate run before I landed him. I then came down to the Kunyoch Pool, and killed one other fish—seven and a half pounds—and a sea trout.

On the 19th we did not fish.

On the 20th I killed three fish of fifteen pounds, fourteen pounds and eight pounds, and one in the Shenval of eight and a half pounds.

On the 21st and 22nd the river was too high for fishing.

On the 23rd I killed one fish, thirteen and a half pounds, in Jocks Cast with a " Blue Phantom," and a sea trout of one pound.

On the 24th I killed two very small fish—one in the Shenval and one in the Boat Pool—of five pounds, and five and a half pounds.

The water still continued very high and almost unfishable, but on the 24th and 29th I killed two fish of fourteen pounds and nineteen pounds, one with a " Mar Lodge " and the other with a dace.

My friend George had not done any serious salmon fishing before, and had never killed a salmon, but he was a good trout fisherman, and very keen. We picked him up with the trap on our way down on the first day we fished, and I asked him what luck he had had. He seemed brimming over with cheerfulness, so I concluded he had got a fish. As a matter of fact, he was very lucky. It was his first salmon ; killed with the fly, and weighed exactly thirty pounds. He was tremendously pleased about this, and the next morning we had a photograph taken, which, owing to the weather, proved rather a bad one, but still it is interesting as a memento of a fishing expedition which I very greatly enjoyed.

On the last two days of our stay most unfortunately the river was so high that it was quite impossible to fish, and so we had to give it up and very reluctantly took our way South once more.

Fishermen, as a rule, are very sportsman-like as regards their conduct to their fellow-fishermen, but I remember an instance which very much disgusted me at the time, and which struck me as being particularly mean. I had been asked to fish a certain water on the Dee, and taking an early train from Aberdeen reached my host's house in time for breakfast. We were just finishing breakfast when General Blank, who was staying in the house, said :

" Well, I think I shall start and make my way down to the water, as you young fellows can walk so much faster than I do." And he left the table. I may say that this beat is an extremely short one, consisting of only two pools, but one of them a very good one. We arrived down at the water to find the General fishing the better pool, and fast

in a fine fish, which proved to be about twenty pounds, after I had gaffed it for him. He had been staying there for some weeks, and had the run of the water all day and every day. My friend and I felt rather sick that he should have taken advantage of us in this way, as he knew full well that it was very seldom we got a day's salmon fishing, only once in a blue moon, and might have foregone his fishing at least until such time as we had had a chance of going over the two pools.

The water, belonging to Mr. Keiller of Morven, is an excellent little stretch in a low water, and consists of the Streams of Gairn, Floating Bank, Little Pol Vheir and Pol Vheir. It is very good summer water, and I have killed a good many fish in it. I remember one August evening going down to the river when it was dead low. There were plenty of red fish about, but none had been taking for a good many days. I waited until almost dusk, and then put on a small double " White Wing " and killed a fish of eight pounds, a cock fish, and then immediately afterwards one of thirteen pounds, a hen fish. It is an easy water to fish, but of very little use if the water is high.

I remember going to Glen Tana on one occasion to find the river in high flood. I was particularly anxious to get a fish to take home that day, as the friend with whom I was staying was giving a dinner party, but Stephen said he thought there was very little chance of my doing anything. I fished all day until late in the afternoon without doing anything, the river gradually going down, but still being very high, and much coloured. I was in desperation. I tried everything—flies, dace, gudgeon, prawns and phantoms. Stephen, seeing my anxiety, said :

"Let me have a last look through your minnow box." And seeing there a large phantom he said: "Well, I'd put that on and give it a trial for luck." It was a Pool, the name of which I rather think was "Little Hell," but don't quite remember. However, I had not made half-a-dozen casts when I hooked a fine fish, and after a glorious run brought him to the gaff, twenty pounds in weight.

CHAPTER VIII

The Lyon at Fortingal—Comfortable quarters—Lovely scenery but little sport—A good spring fish on the Olga fly.

THIS beautiful little river takes its source from Loch Lyon, to the East of the Orchy, and it runs a course of between twenty-five and thirty miles down to its junction with the Tay, which takes place about two miles below, the Loch Tay outlet forming one of the boundaries of the Taymouth Castle policies. It is a very early river, and the average of the fish is large; a charming, but difficult river to fish, flowing through the most beautiful Highland scenery the heart can desire. There is a portion which was, and I believe still is leased to the Fortingal Hotel, Glen Lyon, containing a good number of beats, and showing excellent sport. I regret to say that from all I can hear for the first few weeks the fly takes second place, and the river was, if it is not now, heavily fished with spinning baits of all sorts. This, I think, is the greatest possible mistake, and is apt to spoil the river for the fly fisher. I am no fly purist, and frequently kill fish with spinning baits and prawn when the fly is useless, but I do think that fly ought to have first pride of place, and that bait fishing should only be used as an auxiliary

where sport cannot be had with the fly, and I feel sure that most anglers will think with me.

It is some years now since I visited the Lyon, but we found the hotel extremely comfortable and the cooking excellent, and it is a fishing to which I should have gone again earlier in the Spring had it not been for the fact of this confounded bait fishing, which I have already mentioned.

The trout fishing in the Lyon is also very good indeed, I understand, although I have not had much experience of it, personally.

One April, a good many years ago, I was badly in need of a holiday. Now, a holiday to me means but one thing—fishing—and not being a wealthy man it was often most difficult to find an open water at a fairly moderate charge. I consulted the "Fisherman's Bible"—in other words, Messrs. Watson Lyall's excellent "Sportsman's Guide"— and after spending several interesting evenings weighing the pros and cons of the various waters attached to different hotels, I determined on a visit to the Fortingal Hotel, Glen Lyon.

My wife and I reached Aberfeldy early in the afternoon, and found the carriage I had ordered there waiting. It is a most beautiful drive of some nine miles from Aberfeldy to Fortingal, not the least interesting part of it being where the road passes the stately old Baronial pile of Castle Menzies, where I regretted to see so much noble timber in the park falling a prey to the axe of the woodman. Close to the hotel is an interesting old churchyard with what is believed to be the oldest yew tree in Scotland, if not in the United Kingdom. We were happily placed as to rooms, and, as events turned

THE LATE SIR WILLIAM CUNLIFFE BROOKS, Bart.

Photo by Lady Cunliffe Brooks.

To face p. 80.

out, the cuisine unusually good for a country hotel. The Proprietor was then a Mr. Stuart.

It was too late to start salmon fishing that day, so we took our trout rods and went down to the river. I killed three or four trout, but was greatly disappointed to find the river so low. The frost had held for days, and it had nipped the river down to summer size. All the beats were occupied, but I was promised one for the next day. Unfortunately, all the ghillies were engaged ; however, I was offered the services of a local villager, who was reputed to be a good fisherman and ghillie.

He arrived at 9 a.m., and we got into the trap and drove to the Weavers Pool. The scenery is of the most beautiful description, and beyond my pen to describe. The Weaver is a very narrow pool indeed. It was a very bright, frosty day—the last sort of day one would have chosen for fishing. However, I made the best of it. There was fortunately no grue coming down, and one could, therefore, fish clear and without obstruction.

I had one rug here, which did not materialise, and after putting on a second fly, passed down to the Iron Well Pool, which also proved blank.

We now walked down to the Pulpit Pool, where we lunched before commencing to fish. It yielded nothing, nor did I touch anything in any of the other Pools which I fished that day. It was disappointing, but the scenery was so varied and lovely, and the character of the river so interesting, giving, as it does, every variety of Pool and run, eddy and stilly deep, that mere lack of kill could be forgotten.

Nothing resulted in the fishing of the Long Ladder Pool and Little Ladder Pool. To fish the

former you go down what seemed to me to be a rather long ladder sheer on the face of a precipice, with the boiling Pool below. It is no place for dizzy heads or uncertainly-beating hearts. I think a stout iron staircase should replace the ladder, as it is really a dangerous place, and not every fisher cares to face it.

The water was very clear, and I saw some very large fish in these Pools, but nothing would induce them to look at a fly.

One of the nicest Pools in the hotel reaches is the Broom Pool. It is an easy Pool to fish, and a long one. Peter's Pool is another favourite with many, but it has to be waded with great caution as you are apt to get in deep when you least expect it.

I fished for five days with no success whatever, until the morning of the sixth day, when I got the only fish I killed on that visit. The weather had improved over-night, there had been a thaw, a shower of warmer rain, and the river had got just that dark amber tint which is so inviting. In the Pool above the Rocky Pool I was amused by my ghillie. After trying several flies I started spinning a gudgeon, and must have been surpassing my best form, for he turned to my wife, and said in an awed whisper :

" Look at him ! My God ! Prodeegious ! And does he aalways throw like that ? "

I felt duly flattered on my wife relating this to me when I returned to the hotel.

We came down to the Rocky Pool and had a consultation of war. Ghillie was for one fly and I was for another. Eventually I put on a one and a half inch double iron fly which I had dressed

myself on the Sunday before leaving for Glen Lyon. I named it the "Olga" after my daughter; this fly I have mentioned in another place.

I stood on the top of the rock with the rushing Pool below me, and gently let out line. As I commenced to lift for a cast I saw a flash in the depths, and a fish was on the move after the fly. I tried again, and up he came—a beauty. Situated as I was I could see his every movement, and it was most interesting. He came up with a flash, opened his mouth, and went down upon the fly. He bore straight down upon a ledge of rock and tried hard to nose the fly out of his jaw, his tail almost perpendicular in the air, or rather, water. Then he made a glorious dash to the foot of the pool, which made the reel screech like an angry woman. Then he bored upstream once more, and coming to the surface he jigged, and lashed out in all directions, then settled down to a couple of minutes' sulk. I put on plenty of pressure, and soon had him going again, and after some ten or twelve minutes I brought him to the gaff—a glorious bar of silver weighing eighteen pounds. My wife had just left me to walk back before I hooked the fish.

CHAPTER IX

Ghillies—The silent type—The dyspeptic type—Mr. Littlepraise—The Admirable Crichton of ghillies—The Cravens—Black and white Peters—Sandy Ingram and 6in. irons—James Stephen of Glentana—The hen tickler—My triumph—Keeping a fish—The lady and the fishing—Donald Morgan—"Oot o' Leezie"—The drink of milk.

THE subject of ghillies is a most interesting one to the angler. More especially on waters to which he is a stranger, he is dependent on his ghillie for all sorts of information, as regards the lie of the fish, the size of the water which suits individual pools, the times of day that certain pools fish best, the size and patterns of flies, which vary so much, and the other thousand and one little things which go to a pleasurable day and a full bag. I have personally had great pleasure in their company, and acquired at their hands much weather lore and many useful tips which have greatly contributed to my success, both with trout and salmon. Sometimes, though seldom, I have been able to give a ghillie a new wrinkle from my own experience, and it has always been a great pleasure to return information in kind.

There are almost as many different kinds of ghillie as there are grains of wheat in a bushel. They vary in appearance, temper, skill, tact, thirst,

appetite, rapaciousness, as do the moving throng in the bazaar of a great Oriental city.

There is the gaunt, thin, silent, tall man—an excellent ghillie, but a little too silent. You cannot get him to expand, and he does not enthuse even over a large fish skilfully killed, and does not administer that unction to the soul which all anglers covet when they have performed a noteworthy feat with rod and line; but he is a good servant, and you can rely on him. If he points out to you the spot where a fish of twenty pounds rose, he will not call it forty pounds, as a different type of ghillie might—not because he wants to lie or means to lie, but because he feels it will please you to know that there is a possibility that *the* fish of your life, the laurel wreath, the strawberry leaves of your angling career, might lurk over there by yonder rock.

Then there is the round, red-faced, apoplectic ghillie, with a face like an eastern sunset, with purple cord-like veins as to his nose, and having "a fair round belly with good whisky lined," to misquote. He is often a first class fisherman, this latter, and marvellously active, in spite of his bulk, but just a little too eager to wet each fly for luck, christen each fish, and have a big "doch-an-doris" to wind up the day with, as you wait for the trap, or car, homeward bound.

Then there is the ghillie you feel sorry for. He has a nasty cough, a painful stoop and chronic indigestion. You always feel a brute for not being able to carry all the impedimenta. He always takes water with his very small modicum of whisky, and has rather a jaundiced view of life. He will not press you to put one more fly on on a blank day, but is always glad to go home, and as evening ap-

proaches you will notice that he glances furtively at the hill over which the car must make its first appearance, and pretends he is looking at the western sunset to see how the morrow is likely to shape. He is a bit of a wet blanket, but you know that his shortcomings are due to ill health, and you are very sorry for him.

Then there is that confounded ghillie who is always rubbing in what a fine fisherman Mr. Longlegs is who was there last year, and what a beautiful rod that is of yours, but you should see the one that Lord Muckletoe has; how the Bishop of Beyond threw the finest fly he had ever seen, and as for spinning, the Marquis of Traycle "beat all." Ask him how you are throwing and he will hesitatingly and grudgingly tell you that you are doing very well, but how the Earl of Clanfechan always managed to put the fly *over* that swirl which yours invariably falls short of.

Then there is the man—a sturdy fellow of some 5ft. 8ins., broad, splendid legs, clean as a whistle, clear blue eye, grey brindled hair, tidy moustache and beard, neat as to his clothes, well booted, and with a fine, hearty laugh, which is a tonic. No day too long for him. No flatterer, but you can see approval in his eye when you are surpassing your best form for once. He is never eager to go home. You may be dog-tired, almost sick of fishing—and it is sometimes possible—but he can always get you to put another fly over a pool at dusk, no matter how your back and arms ache. He is modest with the flask and a good judge of what is in it, but never exceeds. He is perfect with the gaff-how few ghillies really are—and will out-bid you at throwing a line, no matter with what rod.

My reader must not for a moment think that in making comparisons I am abusing the ghillie. Taken all round they are a very fine lot of men, with whom it is both a pleasure and a privilege to spend long days by the water-side.

My earliest recollection of having a real ghillie all to myself was old Craven at Riverstone on the Feugh at Banchory. I think he must have been over seventy when I met him first, and in spite of that he was a very hale old man, and threw a wonderful line with a 20ft. hickory and Greenhart rod, which was his favourite weapon. His son Andrew, a great big Hercules of a man, was also a fine fisherman.

At Aboyne, two ghillies with whom I have fished were known as Black Peter and White Peter. Peter Davidson, or White Peter, was a good fisherman. He was so fair as to be almost albino. I remember once fishing the Lauren Pool at Aboyne from the Castle side, and had got into a nice fish when Peter espied three ladies on the opposite bank. He was furious.

"Damn thae leddies! They aye bring bad luck. I have never seen a fish landit yet wi' wimmen looking on."

And sure enough I lost the fish!

"What did I tell ye?" triumphantly. "Damn them."

I do not know whether any other angler has met with a similar dislike to ladies looking on, on the part of the ghillie.

Davidson's counterpart was Peter Bowie, or Black Peter, who was a short, very sturdy man, with black hair.

Sandy Ingram was another well-known character at Aboyne, and a good ghillie. I remember he gave

me the largest fly that I have ever seen or fished with. It was a " Gordon " dressed upon an iron within a fraction of six inches long, and I killed a good many fish with it in cold, early Springs. Such large irons are never seen now-a-days, and how the fashions in flies have changed. In my early days of salmon fishing the " Gardner," " Akroyd " " White Wing," " Glen Tana," " Gordon," " Yellow and Grey Eagles," " Grey Heron," " Black Heron," were great favourites, and, of course, " Jock Scott." Now these are not, I think, quite so popular as of old.

Of all the ghillies I have ever seen or fished with old James Stephen of Glen Tana was the finest all-round fisherman it has ever been my lot to meet. He threw a magnificent line, clean as a whistle and of prodigious length. What he didn't know of weather, wind, water, fish and their ways, was not worth knowing. Very patient in difficulty, and would tell you to an inch almost where you would get the " rug " in a pool. He was a tall, gaunt man with a prominent nose, very thin and spare, a most picturesque figure, and a charming companion at the water side. One always came away having learnt some new wrinkle at " Boatie's " hands. He has been many a year on the Glen Tana Waters, but was pensioned, I think, shortly after Lord Coats brought the property. He was very temperate, both as to eating and drinking. He had a very pretty turn for sarcasm, and I remember well the first time I fished at Glen Tana. He met me, and after the usual greeting he asked for my rod to put it up. It was August, and I handed him my light 14ft. " Castle Connel " Greenhart, in two pieces, spliced by W. Milne of Aberdeen. With an amused smile he said :

"Weel, sir, it would dae fine to tickle hens wi' in a barn-yard, but I doot it's no' strong enough tae hold the fish here unless I'm mistaken."

I was very seriously annoyed (being young), and when he offered a rod from Fasna Darroch, the fishing Lodge close by, I refused with scorn, telling him I was accustomed to the rod and preferred it, in as severe a tone as I could muster. He said no more, but led the way to the Logie Pool, which he thought was a good chance that day. I put on a Bumbee, small double irons, and a "Cabbage" fly for a dropper, as in those days I often fished two flies in summer, but I think it is a mistake, as you are apt to get hung up with one of your flies, especially if a fish should take the dropper.

The inconvenience of fishing with two flies was evidenced one day when, as Stephen was fishing, the late Sir William Cunliffe Brooks came down to watch him. Stephen hooked a fish on the drop fly, and Sir William took the rod to land it. As he got the fish towards the side, out of the depths darted a second fish, which complicated matters seriously, but Sir William, who was a very skilful angler, managed to bring both fish to bank aided by Stephen.

The water was very low, gin clear, and it was a blazing hot day. At the third or fourth cast I hooked a fish of fourteen pounds and had a glorious run, bringing it to gaff in fifteen minutes—not bad for the fowl tickler! I looked at Stephen, but said nothing, and he remained silent. After fishing several other pools, but seeing nothing, I was almost giving up, when he suggested that I should take a last cast on the Pool at the Bridge of Dénnet. I put only one fly on, a "Silver Teal." Half-way down the Pool I hooked a fish, and after an exciting

run I killed it—twelve pounds. All that Stephen said was :

"I was wrong aboot the 'roddie'; it *can* kill a fish, and you, sir, can handle it."

I felt very proud of myself, as this was high praise from Stephen. I was rather surprised to see him pack both fish in his bag, and ventured a gentle remonstrance.

"Your letter does not mention, sir, that you are to have a fish, and so they must go over the hill to Glen Tana, as these are my orders, unless a letter of permission expressly states that the angler is to retain a fish."

He saw I was horribly disappointed, for I was little more than a boy, and advised me when writing again to Sir William to ask if I might keep a fish. I did, and Sir William replied from the House of Commons in his usual genial and kindly way :

"As to keeping a fish, the wielder of the bow and spear is surely worthy of the spoil thereof. Always pick the best fish to take home with you."

Needless to say, after that I always did.

Glen Tana is, to my mind, perhaps the finest all-round water of the Dee, as there are pools which will fish with any sized water. I well remember Stephen saying to me one day when fishing the Waterside Pool that he would not mind paying £100 a year for that Pool alone, and would make a big profit on it. The scenery at Glen Tana is only rivalled by that portion of the Dee-side where you pass between the old gate-posts at Inver and the old bridge at Invercauld, already mentioned.

I would give a great deal to have another day with Stephen on the waters which we fished with such pleasure together. The last occasion on which

I fished there proved to be a blank day. I had just got engaged to be married, and my fiancée was staying with my people. I was going to have a day on the Glen Tana Water, and rather self-sacrificingly she promised to come with me, as it meant getting up somewhere about five in the morning and having a very long and fatiguing day. We reached Glen Tana in due time, and Stephen met us as usual at the Bridge of Dinnet. I had a delightful day's fishing, but, alas! no fish. Just before we parted, he said:

"Well, sir, you have now come here for many years to fish, and this is the first blank day you have had out of all the times you have fished, and I doubt"—glancing good-humouredly at my fiancée—"the lady is to blame, as I have noticed you were paying more attention to her than to the fish."

I have perhaps fished more with Donald Morgan of Ballater than with any other ghillie, and to my great sorrow he passed over to the majority only last year. A day at the river with Donald was pure delight. He had been a soldier before he took to fishing, and was an extremely well set up man of middle height, an A.1. fisherman, and could talk on any subject you liked with great intelligence. He was very keen on politics, but hated shams and artificiality. He was a universal favourite with those for whom he had ghillied, and all the years I knew him I never heard any one say an ill word of Donald.

I remember one very cold day in October we were fishing the middle reach of the Syndicate Water on the Invercauld side of the river, and I had forgotten the flask. We both got so frozen that I said we had better go up to Coil-a-creich to get a drink

and warm ourselves at the fire. Donald agreed, but said :

" Let me ask for the whisky."

We went into the little Inn where there were two great barrels ot whisky at the back of the counter. Donald passed the time of day with the presiding Hebe, and said :

" 'Twa oot o' Leezie."

The lady smiled, and putting her pretty arm round to the back of the cask produced a black bottle, out of which she poured two " nips." This warmed us up a good deal, and we went forth again to the river.

" Noo," said Donald, " if ever ye're here yer leen aye speir fur't oot o' Leezie."

I asked why.

" Sir," he said, " because it's their best whisky ! "

On another occasion I had some very special whisky given to me, and took some to the river to let Donald pass an opinion on it. I gave him a good dram, and asked him what he thought of it. He turned it round and round in his mouth, swallowed it, and smacked his lips.

" Sir, 'ts like a dhrink o' milk ! " In other words, it met with his highest approval.

One day Donald had been fishing with a very wealthy American, and fished with me the following day. I asked him how he enjoyed fishing with the American.

" I had sooner ha'e a day wi' you, sir, and twa hauf-croons at the end o't than a' yer Yankee guineas. He couldna fish ava, and at the end o' the day he offered me a guinea for every fish he killed after 4 o'clock."

" Did he kill any ? "

"Aye, did he? Four fish, mair by luck than guid management!"

Donald was a sportsman, and would never let me spin if he thought there was the least chance with the fly.

Two other Ballater ghillies I have fished with—James Inglis and John Macquarrie. The former only used tobacco in the form of snuff—the solitary ghillie I have come across who did so. He was a dour old chap, very sarcastic, with a dry humour as pungent as his rappee in the old metal box. He never used the word "rug" for a fish taking hold, but instead used the word "plack," which I suppose meant "pluck."

Only a year ago I met a very charming old man—Bishop the Keeper at Auchineden in Stirlingshire, who was out for several days with me, and I found him a delightful companion. He was over seventy, and yet one day when we had tramped some thirteen miles, over dyke, heather and bog, wet often to the knees, he came back at the end of it all as fresh as a boy of twenty. He was extremely fond of poetry, and could quote all the poets of whom I have ever heard.

Lundy, one of His Majesty's keepers, was with me for three weeks, and I found him an excellent fisherman and delightful companion at the water-side. A very quiet man, but always alert and ready, and a most intelligent talker on everything connected with the sport and many things besides.

CHAPTER X

The Don—Cannibal trout and eels—Restocking—A 4lb. ghoul—Expensive fishing—My introduction to dry fly——Poaching on Don—A great afternoon—An educated 30 pounder—The mad fish—A spring fish on trout tackle—The Bell Irving fly—A suicidal fish—The cook and the best trout—A 13lb. pike on trout tackle—The Curate and the Bull—The author and another bull.

THE Don rises near Ben Avon and runs a course of between seventy and eighty miles. In the upper reaches it partakes more of the character of a Highland stream, but from Kemnay downwards it flows through almost a flat country to Fintray, at the lower end of which water it goes through a small gorge and emerges again in meadow-land in Parkhill. The river flows largely through loamy land yielding the best of feeding. Unfortunately, in the lower reaches it contains a multitude of pike, I have killed them up to about eighteen pounds, and these must take up a very heavy toll of the trout and fry. Large trout of three pounds upwards (I think the largest known to be killed was about ten pounds) which have become cannibal, and bottom feeders, abound. These I would kill out with minnow or other spinning bait, or even net them, as I feel quite certain they are detrimental in no small degree to the well-being of the river. My experience of

THE AUTHOR'S DAUGHTER, AGED 6, CATCHING HER FIRST TROUT. THE MUICK, BALLATER.

Photo by Author.

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the Don is that it is not quite so good as it used to be, and I believe it is due to pike, cannibal trout and the very large number of eels which exist, at least in the lower and middle waters. I am sure that there is a great field, and a profitable one, for eel fishing in the Don, and this could be so managed that it would not only be beneficial to the trout fishing; and that it need not in any way interfere with it if properly conducted, only it would need to be done systematically and scientificially.

Another thing which I do not think has been done by any of the proprietors—at least, so far as I know—is that a regular re-stocking with new blood should take place from time to time. It need not be very costly, but the introduction of fresh trout would be greatly beneficial to sport. In the winter the water should be regularly netted for pike, and they should be killed out with trimmers or any other form of engine which can bring about their destruction. The pike of the Don run large, and they are always in magnificent condition—the finest specimens of that fish which I have ever seen anywhere. With regard to the cannibal trout, I have killed them myself up to five pounds in weight, the largest I have killed with the fly being three and a half pounds, and anything over with minnow or gudgeon when fishing for salmon.

I remember one fish of four pounds, which I caught whilst spinning for salmon. It was the most hideous beast which could be imagined—an enormous, cannibal-looking head, with a body which tapered away almost to the thinness of a couple of fingers at the base of the tail. Such a brute as this would account for any number of trout and their fry.

Given a mild April day (they are not many so far North) with a gentle South wind, and on Parkhill, Fintray, Kinaldie, and many other reaches great and lovely baskets should be got. To my mind it is a finer river than the Deveron, as regards size of fish and quality, although by repute one can kill more trout on the Deveron than on the Don.

Last year I happened to travel with a gentleman from Turriff to Aberdeen. He told me that he had paid a little over £100 for a month on the Deveron, and had killed fifteen trout. This, of course, was due to the fact that May did not happen that year to be a very good month for trout. If I were taking a beat for trout in one of these Northern rivers, I should certainly choose April, and chance the weather, May, to my mind, never being so good a month, although the trout may be in rather better condition, but given a mild April, with the trout in good condition, sport should be A.1 on either of these rivers. The Don trout are very beautiful fish, and a breakfast of a half-pounder, fried with oatmeal instead of bread-crumbs, is a feast for kings.

My first experience of dry fly fishing was on the Don many years ago. One bright August day I went trout fishing, and at the end of a lengthy day had drawn blank. I was just at the end of my beat when a fisher appeared over a wall and asked me the boundary of the Kinaldie water. I told him he had just reached it, and asked him if he had done anything, mentioning that I had not. He replied:

"Oh, I have got a few trout."

I gasped! I had fished the Don for twenty years, and here was a mere Sassenach beating me at my own game. It was unthinkable; and, a "Doubting

Thomas," I asked if I might have a look at his catch. He unfolded a piece of linen from his bag, and laid out ten lovely trout, none under half-a-pound, some up to two pounds in weight.

"How on earth did you do it?"

Water dead low, clear blue sky and a brassy sun. Visions of a gentleman poacher with a fine silken net rushed through my mind, and yet he didn't look the part. Again I asked how did he do it.

"Dry fly."

"What on earth is dry fly?"

He kindly explained, gave me a demonstration, a good cigar and a few floating flies. I thanked him very heartily, told him what my thoughts had been, and we had a hearty laugh over it. Since then, thanks to this timely meeting, I have killed many and good fish with dry fly. In a few days in April, 1905, I killed—all with fly, and largely with dry fly—seventy-two trout, my largest being seven of one pound each and two of one and three quarter pounds.

Poaching, unfortunately, on the Don is, I am afraid, still very rife. Some years ago I went to fish the Bedlieston Water with a friend. We only got three or four small trout, and there was a curious and suspicious absence of rise all day. I marvelled at the paucity of the bag, but on meeting the keeper he informed me that several hundredweights of trout had been netted by poachers off that Water the night before. No wonder what fish were left were shy! He told me of a cunning poaching dodge. A poacher had a clever retriever which he taught to swim out with the end of a light silk net in his mouth, make a wide circle, and swim ashore to his masters lower down. One had the shore end of the

net and the other took the end from the dog, and hauling in, got enormous bags of trout, the dog having acted the part of a cobble-boat in the transaction.

The Don is an A.1. Salmon River in the Autumn, given a decent spate after the nets are off on the 26th August, and it is seldom that a season passes without one at least of forty pounds, and a good many up to thirty pounds being killed. My chief objection to it is that the water in most places in the lower reaches at any rate is so dead that it will not " carry " fly, and lifting to cast is difficult, as in such dead water the fly and line sink deep, also one cannot impart the proper alluring motion to the fly.

In October, 1903, I killed a good many salmon on the Don, fishing very irregularly, and usually only for an hour or two at a time. One noble day of sport I had, the memory of which will linger long. I began fishing at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, with old Bill Campbell as ghillie. I fished down the Kinaldie Water without touching a fish. There was a very cold North East wind blowing. I jocularly remarked to Campbell that I would not get a thirty-pounder that day—a thing I was very keen to do, as so far I had only got as high as twenty-eight and three quarter pounds. His reply was :

" You never know."

At the end of the Kinaldie water I saw two fishers who had had no luck either. I crossed the Bridge at Kinaldie intending to try the Boat Pool again from the Fintray side, on which I had permission from the tenant, Captain Dennistoun. I sat down on the bank, and as I leisurely lit a pipe I noticed that the air had become perceptibly warmer. I looked at the chimneys of the Boat Farm, and

observed that the smoke from them now indicated a South West wind, or a complete Volte face from the deadly North East. I mentioned it to Campbell, and he advised an immediate start. I tried three flies over the Pool—a "Lady Caroline," a "Minister" and a "Childers." No result accrued to this attempt, and taking up my spinning rod with a small dace on, I began above the fence. Half-way down I got into a fish, and after a good run landed him—seventeen pounds—a clean, Autumn run fish. I rested the Pool for a few minutes, and then began again. Just opposite the mouth of the Kinaldie Burn I got a furious rug, and struck hard. This was a good one evidently. The knowledge that fish displayed of his surroundings, and the persistence with which he displayed it, was amazing. He ran straight up the centre of the Pool to the neck of it, and there I managed to turn him. Down he came again, always dignified, but very forcible. He got slowly but very surely over to the Kinaldie side, and sailed straight up the Burn, if you please. I got well down below him and lugged him back. He now tried to hang me up in a fence which ran a few yards into the river to prevent the cattle straying, a little below the mouth of the Burn, and I had a very tough job to prevent him getting tangled up in it, as was apparently his objective. Then I got him down the Pool, and for a time feared another disaster. It was this. The Kinaldie Bridge has a pier in the centre of the river which cuts the stream in half, and it was only too apparent that if he went down too far and chose the Kinaldie channel, I being on the Fintray side, we should part company abruptly and finally. I managed to coax him up the pool again. Twice more he sailed up that Burn

almost out of reach, when my line would have been broken by the bank at a bend of the stream. I got him back both times, luckily, then he had another go at the fence. He was weakening somewhat now, but made a final spurt upstream, and on the way back very nearly charged into the fence, in spite of all I could do. I gave him the butt harder than ever, as I felt one or other of us must finish the fight. Inch by inch I got him over to my side. Campbell got a lucky chance with the gaff, and hauled him up the steep bank. He was a picture—a clean run cock of thirty pounds net, with the sea-lice on him. Campbell looked at me and smiled complacently, as he remarked:

"You never know."

It was now almost dusk, and Campbell said, as he put the fish in the bag beside the other:

"Just time for a third, and room in the bag."

I would have preferred to try a fly again, but time was short, as it was getting a little dark, and the dace was so evidently the favourite that I put one on—the last in the bottle, as it so happened.

"The last's aye lucky," said Campbell.

Lower in the Pool, after a few minutes' casting, I got into number three, and a madder fish I never killed. She came straight to the surface, and threw herself high out of the water four times, and then dashed round and round the Pool in a wide circle right on the top of the water, churning the Pool into waves like a torpedo boat whose steering gear has broken down while going at full speed. I never saw such a cafuffle on the part of a fish. She remained in the same part of the Pool, and alternately leapt and dashed round in a circle until so exhausted that I hauled her over the top of the water to the

gaff. She was a hen fish, perfectly clean run, but with no sea-lice.

In less than two hours I had three fish weighing sixty-seven pounds. My trap arrived a few minutes later, and Milne, my coachman, himself a good fisher, an A.1. ghillie, the son of a game-keeper, and a good, all-round sportsman, exclaimed with delight :

" You've fairly done it to-day sir."

It was with mighty pleasant thoughts that I took the reins and drove home in the gloaming. I had a salmon steak for dinner that night.

Fishing on the Caskieben Water, a small stretch of only a few hundred yards long, on a soft, mild April day, with a gentle South West breeze, I had quite a nice little bag of trout, six in number, weighing five pounds, the two largest being one and a half pounds each. I got them on " Hare Lug " and " Red Quill " in less than a hour-and a half.

I also had an exciting experience with larger game. I was using a little 9ft. 6in. Greenhart rod which cost me the modest sum of half a guinea thirty-five years ago, and is still going strong, by the way. I had put up my trap at the Boat Farm on the other side of the river. My coachman, Milne, was with me, and we only had a landing net, and a smallish one at that. I had hooked something which at the moment I thought was a large trout, but presently showed itself, and proved to be a nice little Spring fish. It was a very gentlemanly fish, not in the least violent, and I played him very nicely and with great care, and got him near enough the edge for Milne to see. Unfortunately, the bank there was about 6ft. above the river, and although Milne lay on the ground he could not get at the fish, and in any case the net would not have held it.

There was nowhere I could beach him ; it meant a long gaff, and I had not got one. Suddenly " Salmo " said to himself :

" I have had enough of this tomfoolery," and made a dash sea-wards, taking out every inch of line, and eventually going off with half the cast. He had taken the " Hare Lug " at the tail as the " Red Quill " returned to me with what was left of the cast. It was one of those events which happen in fishing fairly frequently, where no language or depth of voice can adequately express the pent-up feelings, and one can only gasp. It occurred to me after we had left that if Milne had slid down the bank and got into the water waist-deep, he might have been able to tail the fish, but one did not think of it in time.

Another good hour's fishing I had on this same stretch shortly after was when I had trout of one and a half pounds, one and a quarter pounds, one pound, two and a half pounds, and three smaller ones weighing two and a quarter pounds, mostly with the flies known as " Professor Cash " and " Hare Lug."

A fly came before my notice about this time, I think, if I recollect aright, through a letter in the " Field." It was called the " Bell Irving " and it proved a tremendous killer, chiefly, I fancy, because it was a novelty. It is curious how fashions even in trout flies change. Many years ago no cast was complete without a " Lord Saltoun " on it. Of late years, however, I have been unable to do much with it, when formerly it was nearly always the " piece de résistance." Taken all round, I fancy I have killed more trout with red, blue and grey " Quill," " March Brown " and " Hare Lug "

than with any other flies, except the "Bell Irving."

While on the subject of salmon, I meant to mention that from September 9th, 1903 to October 22nd, I killed twelve salmon, whose aggregate weight was 240 pounds, and that fishing only on occasional days, and for a few hours.

What the Don would be as a salmon river if netting were stopped or greatly lessened, obstructions removed and pollution drastically dealt with, I can only make a conjecture, but a pleasant one. The entrance to the sea is not bad, there is no shipping to contend with, as in the case of the Dee—in fact, no disturbance to a complete and unhindered ascent, bar some pollution, nets, dykes and poachers, both net and snigger. Still, all these obstacles could be overcome if there were sufficient determination to overcome them, but this, I fear, is to some extent lacking.

I had a curious experience with a large Autumn fish at the Red Brae on the Torryburn Water once. I had run a fish for a considerable time, when suddenly he came to my side so quickly that I could not get in all the slack, and just before I got it all in he went slap across the stream again, and ran himself ashore on the opposite side, hitting a rock with his nose such a smack that I thought I actually heard the thump. I reeled him up, and when I gaffed him he was so stunned that he never recovered.

Curiously enough, I had a similar experience on the Dee with a smaller fish in the Pool of the same name (Red Brae) on the Syndicate Water on the Dee at Invercauld. This fish actually ran himself high and dry on the pebbles on the opposite bank, and as he floundered and kicked on the stones I

was afraid the hook would work out, but fortunately it did not, and I duly landed him. Donald Morgan was with me, and said he had had a similar experience in the very same Pool some years before.

One year I was staying in Ballater, but had no fishing. I met Donald, who said he was going up to try and get a fish for the tenant to take South with him, and as the water was so drumly the only thing was to try worm. We walked up, and on the way Donald related how he had lost a fish the day before on a small butcher in Jocks cast. We arrived at the river, and he tried Jocks cast, but got nothing. We came down to the Pool below, and there he hooked and landed a fish of fourteen pounds with the worm, and hanging from the outside of its left lower jaw was the identical butcher with which he had hooked the fish the day before.

An amusing thing happened when I was paying a visit to friends who live on Don-side. They had got a new cook, rather a nice old thing, whom we all liked. Each evening when my friend John and I went to her to have our catch of trout weighed, she seemed to take a very great interest in this, and invariably said :

" Which do you think is your best fish, Mr. John ? " followed by : " And which is *your* best, sir ? " to me.

Naturally gratified, we took a pride in pointing out the two best-conditioned fish of our take. After a considerable time it began to dawn upon us that our two best trout were becoming conspicuous by their absence from the breakfast table. One day, John's mother, having had occasion to go to the kitchen on some urgent matter while we were at breakfast, came back therefrom with a broad smile on her face.

'I asked where cook was, and the kitchen maid said,' 'Oh, up in her room, ma'm.' "As I wanted urgently to see her, I went up, and to my utter atonishment she was sitting over a good fire in her bedroom, with a face very red from the heat, frying what I took to be your two best trout of yesterday!"

John and I grinned feebly. That was "some" cook! She never asked us again which we thought our best trout, but left her situation shortly afterwards.

One evening I was fishing the Seven Sisters Pool, so called from seven large trees which decorated its bank, and saw what I took to be a very large trout rise. With a light line and a 10ft. rod it was quite out of reach for fly, so, on the same rod—as it was the only one I had with me—I put up a natural minnow with an extra heavy lead to make it carry, and cast over the fish. I should mention that I had a boy of twelve with me, doing ghillie. At the second cast I was into a fish, presumably *the* fish, but very soon, from his manner of running, I took him to be a pike, and a fairly large one. Whether it was this pike which had broken water, I do not know, as I could not tell in the half-light, although from the rise I took it to be a trout. I had only the half guinea rod before mentioned, and it took me a good fifteen minutes to get him to the gaff (I always carry a gaff now, as while trout fishing I have lost so many salmon by not carrying one), and as he got near the edge he opened his enormous mouth and gave a sort of squelching groan. The boy's eyes fairly started out of his head. He gave a wild shriek, and tore off homewards. I could not call him back, I was so convulsed with laughter. The pike weighed thirteen pounds, and as pike go was a

beautifully shaped and plump fish. I left him with a farmer hard by, as I do not eat pike. I met my erstwhile ghillie the next day, and asked why he had bolted.

"I was fear't he'd jump oot an' bite's. I thocht he was the de'il."

Just above that same pool is a field in which the bull always seems to be a perfect fiend. My first experience of one there was when bathing with John and his brothers, and a plump, rosy little curate, who is now My Lord Bishop. We left our clothes on the bank, and were enjoying our bathe, when down dashed the bull, snorting with rage and fury, and lashing his tail wildly. He tore up the bank, tossed the clothes about, and refused to leave. We were getting mighty chilly, and as the water was deep right up to the bank, we began to wonder how we were going to get out of it. Having expended his rage his majesty took it into his head that after all we were very probably poor harmless creatures, and stalked away with a blasé air, much to our relief. We slunk out, dressed in great haste, crept down the river's edge, and when within range of the fence, legged it for dear life.

The next time, many years after (it could not have been the same bull), in the same field, Milne, my coachman and I were walking across the middle of the field when I saw the brute coming for us, and by his gait and demeanour meaning mischief.

"Do you see him, sir?"

I said: "Yes, and he is going for us."

"Aye, is he, the deevil! We'll juist walk on a little yet, and syne when he starts tae gallop we'll run like hell." The advice seemed good. Our only weapons were a light landing net and a 10ft. rod.

We were in the middle of the field, which was as bare as Salisbury Plain, not a tree or anything else to go for—only a bolt for the fence, which seemed the furthest-away fence I had ever known. Presently, down went his head, up went his tail, and with a reverberating roar he started. I need hardly say we started too, and I never did 500 yards in better time! We had just thrown ourselves over the dyke when at it he came, and severely bashed his ugly head on the stones on top of it, much to our glee, now that we were on the right side of the wall.

CHAPTER XI

Rods—Greenheart and split cane—My first rods—The choice of lines—Composite rods—The length of salmon rods with steel centre and without—Handling the rod—Right and left hand casting—Choosing a rod in a tackle shop—Waders—Bags and creels—Double tapered lines—Casting lines—Always use fine tackle and the best—Colour of gut—Gut loop v. metal eye—The fly cabinet—Soaking the gut—The doubtful loop—Fly dressing at the Star and Garter—Ask the ghillies advice.

RODS are like books—" of the making of them there is no end." Every man has his own particular fads and fancies, and personally I think it is a mistake for any angler—however much of a novice he may be—to get a friend—no matter how great an expert the friend may be—to choose a rod for him. The novice will very likely profit by certain hints which his expert friend may give him, but only his own sense of touch can tell him what is the balance which suits his particular wrist, and a rod which may be absolutely the last word for a man who has an extremely powerful, muscular wrist, will undoubtedly be quite the wrong thing for a man who has a delicate wrist with muscles of slight calibre. My advice, therefore, to the novice is, if he does not care to choose his rod off his own bat, so to speak, to get his expert friend to go with him to the tackle maker's, and, choosing some half dozen rods, slightly differing

in balance, then himself to choose from amongst these what seems most suited to his own particular needs.

Personally, I always chose my own rods, but then I began very early, and learnt by slow and painful experience what rods suited me best, and what rods were suited to particular kinds of fishing.

I think it wrong for the novice, unless he really means serious business, to choose an expensive split cane rod, but should rather choose a Greenhart or other plain wood rod, practising with this until such time as he is more or less of an expert himself, when, if his pocket corresponds with his inclinations he can get a more expensive outfit.

With regard to reels, there are so many good reels now that if the beginner is wise he will allow his tackle maker to choose for him a reel that will balance the rod which has already been chosen.

My first rod, as will be remembered, was made of ash ; then followed hickory, greenheart, washaba, and other woods, but I must confess that after many years and much experience with rods of all classes and made of a large variety of materials, I prefer a good rod made of split cane, by a known maker of these.

The price of rods has, of course, increased enormously, as has everything else in these post-war days, and the bargains which one used to get twenty years ago are, of course, things of the past. A rod in my possession, and which I have already mentioned, is a little 9ft. 6in. rod of greenheart, which cost me the modest sum of half-a-guinea. I have killed innumerable trout with it, and a good many salmon, some of them as heavy as fifteen pounds. That rod is still going strong, although, of course,

it is not quite as straight as it used to be, and shows considerable signs of wear. Still, I would not hesitate to tackle a twenty pound salmon with it even now.

With regard to lines, they are as numerous as rods in form, design, weight and dressing. My own personal fancy as regards lines, both for salmon and trout, is rather wedded to a line known as the "King Fisher." The dressing is very smooth and even, lasts well, and so far, although I have had a good many in my possession, I have never yet had a bad one.

Although, of course, an expert angler must have in his possession a good many rods for different purposes—i.e., a rod for wet fly, one for dry fly of from 8 to 10ft. or even 11ft. if he is the happy possessor of a strong wrist; rods for spinning, rods for upstream worming and general bait fishing, and so on,—I should strongly advise the novice to invest at the beginning of his career only in one rod, and let him use that for all purposes until such time as he has found his "fish legs," and then he may please himself.

No two rods are the same in balance. On more than one occasion friends of mine have been so delighted with a particular rod that they have had a companion made to it, but the balance has never been got out exactly the same as the original one, and I very much doubt if it is possible. There may be, no doubt, skilled workmen who can, to all intents and purposes, turn out a rod of *apparently* the same balance, but I have never seen two rods so exactly the same as to be unable to detect some difference between them. For some reason which is difficult to gauge, one rod will have a life in it and a spirit

in it which another rod of the same type just lacks, and it makes all the difference in fishing, as in other things, when one has in one's hands a tool with which one is perfectly satisfied. I am not fond of composite rods—i.e., rods partly built of cane and partly built of some other wood, such as greenheart. I believe now that a very first-class greenheart is extremely difficult to get and, therefore, prices for first-class rods of this wood have immeasurably gone up.

With regard to salmon rods, for a powerful man on a large river perhaps 18ft. is the ideal, especially if the angler is fishing pretty much all the year round, but for the man who can only fish at certain specified times—perhaps once or twice a year—I have no hesitation in saying that he will find more comfort and possibly kill as many fish with a good 16ft. rod as he will with an 18ft. I have used rods myself up to 20ft. in length, but personally, now, I never use a longer rod than 16ft. Doubtless on some very large rivers a rod of 18ft. would be an advantage, but the comfort which I have in using one of 16ft. to me quite outweighs any advantage which might accrue to one of the greater length.

I prefer, when using a split cane rod, to have one with a steel centre, although many anglers, I understand, do not care for this, as they say that there is not the same amount of elasticity as in a rod which has no steel centre.

The holding of a rod in the hands makes a very great difference in fishing. You will see one man holding a rod in such a way that although he is getting the most out of it, he is giving himself an infinite amount of extra labour, while the shifting of the hand by, it may be, a fraction of an inch,

would give him the same amount of power with lessened fatigue. I do not think that it can be laid down in a book how one is to handle a rod, but a few hints from one who is an experienced fisher, to the tyro at the river, will do more to put him in the right way than any amount of printed instructions.

The amount of labour which is put into casting by different men is very instructive. One man you will see who throws an excellent fly and a long line without, apparently, any great effort on his part—in fact, it seems as simple as daylight. Another man who will throw perhaps an equal length of line it will be noticed is straining all the time in order to do it. This shows that either his method of handling the rod is faulty, or that the rod does not suit him, or that he is attempting to throw a line which is beyond his capacity, and it is far better to throw a line which is within your capacity than to bungle a greater length of line which is not.

It will be found that a right handed man will cast very much better on the left bank of the river looking towards the sea than he will upon the right bank, for reasons which are obvious. Personally, I am pretty much ambidextrous, but in some things I incline to be left-handed—at cricket and at golf, for instance—but at tennis, billiards and shooting I am right-handed, and although I can throw a fairly good line off both banks of the river, I infinitely prefer to fish from the right bank of the river—i.e., over my left shoulder—because it seems to come more naturally to me, and I can throw a longer line, a neater line, and place my fly much more accurately—all this with a two-handed rod, of course.

On the other hand, using a trout rod I can throw

a better line and a neater line holding the rod in my right hand.

Many men prefer to have their reel handle so placed as to be used by the left hand. I simply cannot do it.

Every man has his own favourite rod make. Personally, I have had rods from many makers, and each maker has his own virtues. I think that the novice should certainly go to a rod maker of repute —and there are many of these in London and elsewhere—and if he goes to one who has a good reputation he cannot go very far wrong in the choice of a rod.

I am very greatly against choosing a rod in a tackle shop, and I think it is a thousand pities that tackle makers have not got some place where one could really test a rod with reel and line; and I make a point, if I am buying a rod, of having a selection sent to me, and trying the rods, if not upon a river, at least where there is plenty of space for casting purposes.

As regards waders, I think there is a tendency to have these much too heavy, and on a long stretch of salmon water to be covered in a day, especially if there is any great distance between the Pools, the fatigue involved in walking over rough ground in heavy trouser waders, is great. I believe in buying the lightest waders possible. Of course, this means that they will not last so long as the heavier type, but it certainly means very greatly increased comfort in walking. Then waders, of course, are much more likely to be punctured by thorns and other bugbears of the angler at the waterside, than the thicker variety, but personally in this direction I have had no trouble whatever.

Many men wear heavy leather brogues, and I have sometimes had perforce to wear them myself. They are a great mistake. Boots, although a little heavier, are preferable to shoes, and they should be made with the uppers of stout, rot-proof canvas, with several eye-letted holes just where the uppers join the sole in order to let the water run out. Thick socks should, of course, be worn over the waders, and also over knickerbocker stockings in the waders. This means taking rather a larger size than would otherwise be necessary, but the increased comfort and the lessened risk to bruised feet, and increased immunity from cold, make them worth while.

I never wear trouser waders where stocking waders will do. They are hot and uncomfortable at the best. But I think that stocking waders should be made to come right up to the fork, and, therefore, they should be made to measure for each particular individual, which will cost a little more, but I think it is well worth it.

With regard to bags and creels, to my mind trout should never be carried in a bag, but should be carried in a wicker creel or basket, and it is a good plan to have a piece of old sheet or tablecloth in which to wrap the trout, which prevents the basket becoming unduly slimy, and interfering with the lunch and other things which may happen to be in the basket. In a bag the fish receive the heat of the sun on the outside, and the heat of the wearer on the other side, which is extremely bad for fish in hot weather.

When speaking on the subject of lines, I should have mentioned that I prefer a double tapered line.

With regard to the subject of lines being tapered or not tapered, it is a matter of individual choice. Undoubtedly I think one can throw a longer line

with a level line than one can with a tapered, particularly in a wind, but for neatness in casting I think the tapered line is the better of the two, and personally I always use a double tapered line, both for trout and salmon.

With regard to casting lines, in the case of salmon fishing there should be a tapered *plaited* cast of three four ply gut between the reel line and the single gut cast to which the fly is attached. I much prefer plaited to twisted gut for this cast, but it is sometimes hard to procure—I fancy because it has to be done by hand, whereas the twisted treble can be done upon a little machine for the purpose, and turned out at a great rate.

One maxim which all anglers should rise to in the morning and go to bed with firmly in their minds at night is: "Never use thicker gut than is absolutely necessary, and always buy the best." This is expensive, but especially in the case of a man who can only get away to fish once or twice a year, it is a sine qua non, for to think of a fortnight's holiday with the best fish lost owing to a faulty cast is—well, to be Irish—unthinkable: therefore, buy the very best.

There are many ways of tinting gut, and each man has his favoured colour. Mine is that weed green of Hardy's.

There is now a great vogue for eyed flies, and I almost fancy that the sale of eyed flies and flies to gut is about equal. Let me say at once that I look upon eyed flies as an invention of the devil. To my mind no fly, however neatly it is knotted, eye to cast, lies half so well in the water as the fly that is tied to gut. There is, no doubt, one great—to my mind the only—gain in the eyed fly, and that is

that the metal eye cannot perish, whereas the gut eye can and does, often in a remarkably short space of time. Still, my advice is to buy flies to gut, but buy the least possible number. A multiplicity of flies is anathema.

I have friends who own cabinets almost as large as those fascinating cedar wardrobes containing the priceless, or now nearly so, Havanas ; cunning little flat drawers in which the flies lie in beauty side by side, representing much money. I remarked to the owner of one such cabinet :

" My dear chap, why such prolixity ? In half-a dozen life-times you could not use a tithe of them."

"No,"—regretfully,—" I suppose I could not. But then "—brightly—" think of the joys on winter evenings."

" Ah," said I, " you and I are looking at things from a totally different standpoint. You collect flies as others do stamps or china or Raeburns," and so it was. He knew he could never use them, but he loved to lift them from their velvet or baize-covered tray and preen their feathers between his fingers, and descant on their points, much as another friend would point to the painting of a hand, or a piece of lace, or a flesh tint in one of his priceless pictures. Well and good—let the collector collect, and the fisher fish.

Take one river—the Dee—give me a " Mar Lodge," a " Childers," a " Thunder and Lightning," a " Blue Charm," a " Silver Teal," a " Glen Tana." a " Gardener," an " Ackroyd "—the latter both the brown wing and the white wing type—and I will kill as many fish as a man with a whole battery of flies. I think it was Lundy, one of His Majesty's keepers, who told me that he could do very well with

four flies, of which "Silver Teal" and "Blue Charm" were the two favourites.

Flies should never be kept in fly books; they should be kept in boxes with clips for the purpose. In books they attain the crease and flatness which is so desirable in trousers, but so reprehensible in flies. They lose their sheen by being pressed between the parchment leaves, and the gut loops—or in the case of trout flies, the gut leaders—perish more quickly than if kept in boxes.

As regards irons, for salmon I prefer the slender Dee iron, no matter on what river, as I think they are less clumsy in the water, have more spring and resiliency, and are, therefore, more likely to take hold than a heavier iron of a different shape.

When using salmon flies with gut loops or eyes, always soak and test severely before using, unless absolutely brand new, as many a good fish, is lost by fishing with a fly of last season's make, or it may be of several years ago, where the loop has not been so tested.

I was fishing with a friend who killed three fish on a fly of a peculiar pattern, and it seemed the only thing the fish would take that day. With the last fish he broke the barb in extracting it. Looking through his flies he found he had only one of a similar pattern, and to me the loop looked doubtful. I said nothing, but watched him test it. He did so gingerly and half-heartedly, and I had no doubt that it was passing through his mind, as it had done through mine, that the loop was doubtful, but so keen was he to kill another fish that he would not own it to himself, and only showed his doubt in the gentle test he gave it. He fished, he hooked, and he lost! Then I spoke.

"You thought in your heart of hearts, my friend, that that was a doubtful loop, and didn't half test it, as you'd have done if you had had more of the same pattern, and if the doubt was not in your mind."

"You are quite right; I had a doubt, but I was so keen to kill another I would not express my thought to you, as I felt you would insist on my testing it severely, and I was sure it would not stand it."

How many a good fish is lost by this "head-in the sand" policy.

I have dressed a good many salmon flies in my time, although I never learnt the art at the hands of a teacher, but just picked it up by myself. The flies I dressed were, of course, much rougher than those tied by a professional, but they killed, so it seemed to me (or was it my conceit?) better than the article which was a real thing of beauty as to shape and finish—or was it because, being my own creation, I had greater pride in it, and, therefore, greater keenness to kill a fish with the product of my own hands, and so fished with greater alertness and finish? I think that every salmon fisher should, if possible, learn to tie a fly, for there is greater pleasure in killing a fish, particularly if the fly is of a pattern evolved from one's own ego, than if it was a fly bought in a shop at a price. The same applies to trout flies, only the latter require such good eyesight for some of the tiny patterns that I have had to leave them to younger eyes.

It may be interesting here to note that I had the pleasure of introducing salmon fly dressing as a light occupation for the patients of the Star and Garter Home at Richmond in Surrey, and that one or two

men became quite expert at the game. I killed several of my fish at Balmoral on flies dressed by Star and Garter patients, who partook of the fish caught with their flies. It is only fair to say that this was made possible by the kindness of Messrs. Farlow, whose Manager, Mr. Hunter, kindly permitted the Misses Harper to come down and instruct the men, and right willingly did these ladies give up their Saturday afteroonn holiday for many months, to instruct the wounded in the art.

Now I am going to preach what, alas, I do not always practise. Don't keep flies in your cap or fishing hat. One often—and perhaps wisely—puts them there to dry, but unwisely leaves them there. It is ruination to the feathers, the jungle cock is knocked off a Jock Scott, or the hat is thrown down on the hall table, and a wing gets broken or twisted. If you must dry them in your hat, swear religiously to remove the lot before or immediately on your return home, or one day you will find perhaps that the only fly left of the taking pattern is one which has sustained serious damage in this way.

As a boy I put one or two salmon flies in my cap, because they looked nice, or conveyed, *perhaps*, to the beholder that here was a very young felow who had killed salmon, or he would not wear flies in his hat! As I grew to maturity, and had killed salmon, I still put them in my hat, but that was to avoid putting them wet amongst others in a dry box. Now, as an older angler, I don't put them in my cap at all, except occasionally in a thoughtless moment.

When fishing a river new to you, and having no patterns peculiar to the district, don't insist on using those for another river, and swear to the ghillie that you know they will kill as well as in the river they

were intended for. Pocket your pride, and borrow one or two from him, adding, if you care, a little to the day's end doceur. The ghillie will think the better of you and if he is a good fellow, will be delighted to feel he has really helped you to kill a fish you would otherwise have failed to do.

With regard to gut substitutes, I am not prepossessed by these. They lack the stability and back-bone of gut, and they don't deliver the goods—that is the fly—so neatly as good Spanish gut. But a hank of this silken material may be useful in other ways, to splice a broken top or other joint, and for whipping and splicing generally when the need arises.

CHAPTER XII

The Deveron—Overnetting—A dry summer—Bowie the son of an old friend—A few fish seen but no luck—Trial of many lures—Tea by the riverside—The lake at Auchry—The lake at Delgaty Castle.

THE Deveron, which of late years has considerably improved as a salmon river, has a course of about sixty miles, rising on the Western border of Aberdeenshire, and eventually falling into the North Sea at Banff. As it leaves the Cabruch it flows North East, or nearly so, until it reaches Huntly, and below this it receives its two chief tributaries—the Bogie and the Isla. Each of these streams is about sixteen miles in length, and I am afraid that they are fairly badly polluted, as the small town of Huntly drains into the Bogie, and that of Keith into the Isla. Still, take it all round, the Deveron is not so badly polluted as many rivers. In the upper reaches it partakes to some extent of the characteristics of a Highland stream, but lower down, nearer its mouth, it flows through more pastoral scenery, and looking down the river on a summer day from, say, Muiresk, it might be a river of Devon.

For a long time it was very much over-netted, and it has also suffered from silting up badly at the mouth, so that the fishing greatly declined. The

first step towards improvement was, of course, the removal of the cruives, which were in the hands of the Duke of Fife. In 1898 the dyke across the river was destroyed, and the fishing has, to some extent, (but I think not proportionately) improved; but there is further hope for improvement in the future.

The Deveron is not a very wide river, and is, therefore, to my mind, a most pleasant one to fish.

The beats which I know best are those of Eden, which belongs to Lady Nicholson, Ardmiddle, which belongs to Mr. J. A. Milne, and Muiresk, which belongs to Mr. Henry Farquhar Spottiswood.

Unfortunately, my experience has been confined to fishing in the month of August during a very dry season, when the river was supposed to have been lower than it had been for twenty years. In many places it was little more than a trickle. It might be compared to a good-sized Highland burn. With such conditions, of course, it was impossible for a fish to run, and although many of the Pools contained a few salmon, grilse and sea-trout, they were all very red, as one could see when they rose, and so "potted" that they simply would not look at anything. I tried everything short of worm, and in the case of worm I very much doubt whether I should have had any success. There are times in the life of the salmon when it simply will not look at anything without the stimulant of fresh water. Unfortunately, I had not a thermometer with me, and could not take the temperature of the water, but I am certain that it was very high, as it was so warm to the hand.

The first day that I fished the Ardmiddle water on this occasion was as hot as an Indian summer, with a bright blue sky and the usual brazen sun.

CORBY HA' POOL, ABERGELDIE, ABERDEENSHIRE DEE.

Photo, Bisset, Ballater.

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I went one afternoon to Ardmiddle about the middle of August, and my host said that he was afraid there was not much chance of a fish. The rest of the party migrated to the tennis ground, while I went down to the river where Bowie, the keeper, was to meet me.

On meeting him by the top Pool, which I was to fish, I put the question to him :

" Have you ever had any relation of the same name at Aboyne in Aberdeenshire, called ' Black Peter ' ? "

Bowie's face lighted up at once, and he told me that " Black Peter " was his father, and was greatly interested when I told him that his father had ghillied to me many times on the Birse water there, and indeed, I must have seen this same Bowie as a boy at Aboyne more years ago than I care to count. This, naturally, brought about a bond of sympathy between us, and he was very keen indeed that he should gaff a fish for me as his father had done before him.

We commenced in the House Pool, which one could see with another foot of water would be a most tempting pool to fish. I put on a very small double iron " Silver Teal," and fished very carefully. Just as I was nearing the end of the Pool a very red fish of at least 18 pounds rose right out of the water on the opposite side, but evidently not upon feeding bent, as my fly passed him quite unnoticed. It seemed almost a hopeless task, and I hardly care to relate my experiences but for the fact that in all fishing books there is a tendency to give an account of the " Red Letter " days, and leave out those days when one, like Peter, " toils hard and catches nothing."

I tried a second fly over the Pool—a small "Blue Charm"—and again drew blank.

We now went down to a very large and long Pool below the hut. Even in this low water there must have been 6ft. or 8ft. at least, right up to the edge, and wading was not required, but alas! it was like a Highland Loch, smooth and oily, and with hardly a trace of current in it. Bowie told me he knew there were fish in it, but there was not enough current to carry the fly properly. However, I was there to fish, and fish I did.

I fished right down very carefully, using the same flies as I had done in the upper Pool, and with a similar result. Bowie said he thought that possibly towards evening there might be a chance in this Pool. I saw nothing rise in it as I fished down.

We then went down to the Peninsula Pool, which is a very pleasant one, but at the top of it the neck is not more than 10ft. wide, with about 1ft. of water crossing over it. I also fished this most carefully, as I was particularly anxious to let Bowie see me kill a fish. Half-way down the Pool I got an uncertain touch, which I believed was a fish, and I struck, but it did not materialise.

I then tried—after putting the two flies over it—a prawn, and again about the middle of the Pool I got a touch, and on reeling up it was evident that a fish had made a grab at the prawn between the hooks, and thus avoided being hooked. I was wearing trouser waders, and it was abominably hot.

I came out again and had a long rest by the big Pool below the hut, and was very glad indeed to see the footman bearing a tea-tray with the necessary adjuncts to a riverside meal.

I had a very long and interesting conversation on

fish and fishing with Bowie, and from what I gathered he was a very keen and also a good fisherman.

Waiting until dusk, I fished the Pool down again, first with fly, then with a "Devon Minnow," then with a "Blue Phantom," and then with a prawn. I saw six fish rise altogether, and almost invariably after I had put a fly or bait over them, but they could not be induced to take hold.

I then went up to the hut and after a much needed whisky and soda, and a cigar, we motored home.

The next day I was not fishing, and I was rather sorry that I had not gone to the water, as although there had been no rain, there was a very strong Westerly breeze, and I heard subsequently that our afternoon at the water had so stimulated Bowie that he went down to the river, fished hard all day, and got a small fish of five pounds.

Two days afterwards I went to fish the Eden Water. Benn, the keeper, was waiting for my friend and myself, and we walked to one of the upper Pools. Benn was not at all certain that there were any fish in that Pool, but it was a good one, and he thought worth fishing. My friend put up his trout rod, and devoted his attention to trutta fario. I fished the Pool carefully down with a "Blue Charm," and then put a prawn over it, but saw nothing. The water was so very low that the next two Pools were unfishable, and we went down to the Doctors Pool. This is a very fine Pool, very deep, and a holding Pool at all seasons of the year, a little difficult to fish, perhaps, but one could imagine what it would be on a cold October day, with plenty of water and a run of big Autumn fish on. If I recollect aright, Ben told me that the largest fish which had been killed was forty-two pounds with the fly.

I commenced at the top Pool and fished down most carefully, first with a "Green Teal," then with a "Silver Teal," then with a "Blue Charm," then with a "Phantom Minnow," and then with a prawn. I saw two fish rise; neither of them was large, and one of them was beyond my reach, as the lower part of the Pool one cannot wade, it is too deep.

Presently the house party came down, and we enjoyed an excellent tea amidst most pleasant surroundings. After a long rest I fished the Pool again. Trout were rising in myriads, and I saw one salmon rise again—I think probably the same one which I saw first. I then tried the Pool again, first with fly, then with a "Phantom Minnow," but without that tightening of the line which goes to make the pleasure of a day's fishing.

We now consumed many scones and sandwiches, washed down by tea from thermos flasks, and then went up to the house.

There are two beautiful views of the river, the best one, I think, being from the Billiard Room, the winding thread of the river with the sunset upon it making a most beautiful picture. Having said "good-bye" to our hostess we motored home, once more with unblooded gaff. Still, it was all very pleasant, as it was new water to me, and I had a kind invitation to return in October when the big fish were on, when I might feel pretty certain of killing some fish, and possibly getting that forty pounder which I have fished for forty years to catch, but whose weight I have not yet reached.

I then motored over to Auchry, where I spent a few very happy days, and caught a few very pretty trout on the lake. These trout seldom run to more than half a pound, although there is no doubt there

are larger fish there. They were in prime condition, and fought more gamely, I think, than any trout I have ever caught.

One day when I should have done really well, I was unfortunate enough to have no-one to row the boat, and lost seven good fish by the boat drifting down over them while I was playing them. I managed, however, to get five fair-sized fish. I tried to make an anchor with the chain of the boat tied round a large stone, and for a time this answered very well, but eventually the chain got loosened, and at a critical moment, when I was in a fairly large fish, the hold gave, and the boat, drifting down over the top of my fish, disaster followed.

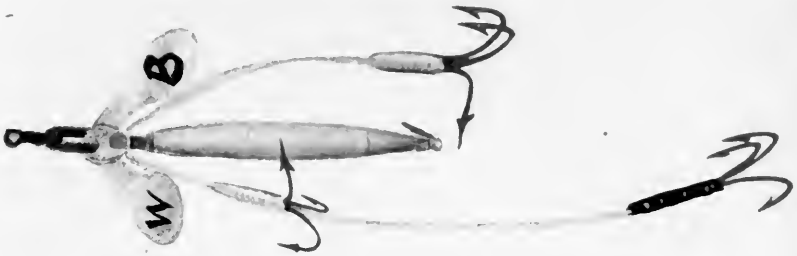
I also on two occasions fished the lake at Delgaty Castle and the possibilities of it, I think, are great. It is a very beautiful lake surrounded by trees, and there are two excellent and handy fishing boats. On the first occasion I fished it there was practically no breeze, and I only got two small trout. The next time I fished it there was an excellent breeze, but it was very cold and not a good day for fishing. I believe that large baskets have been filled on this lake, and the fish run to a very fair size.

CHAPTER XIII

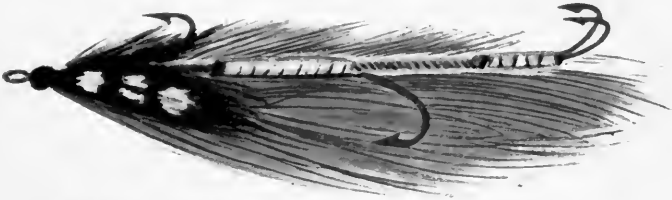
The Ythan—Dr. Fowler's big fish—The Ythan at Ellon and Newburgh—The lures to use—Golf links and bathing—Get your flies locally for this river—Lord Aberdeen's generosity—The sportsman's bible—An illustrated guide to Quarters—Duck and rabbit shooting—The *Ugie*—A good little river easily fished—The all conquering Zulu.

THE Ythan rises at the Wells of Ythan, towards Auchterless, where there is a small fall. There is a very flat stretch between Fichie and Methlick, near the old House of Gight, the property of Lord Aberdeen, and which at one time it is believed belonged to the poet Byron's family. Throughout its whole course the Ythan is fairly good for trout, and from Ellon to the sea it is excellent for finnock, sea-trout, and in the Autumn for salmon, the latter of which run to a large size. Dr. Fowler, Ellon, has, I believe, a good many years ago, killed a fish of well over forty pounds, and nearly every year some notable fish is brought to bank.

The total course of the river is about thirty-seven miles. By staying at the Inn at Ellon, or at the Udney Arms Hotel at Newburgh, excellent fishing can be had for quite a moderate sum. I have fished this river both at Ellon and at Newburgh, and never failed to get good sport.



Minnow Tackle.



The Killer, used for Finnock on the Ythan.

The Olga.

(The above were drawn by Private John Robinson, Star and Garter Hospital).

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The hotel at Newburgh is extremely comfortable, the cooking particularly good, and Mr. Ritchie, the host, makes the keenest endeavour to please his guests and help them in every way. I have no interest in this hotel whatever, but I think it is a great help to anglers to mention by name any hotel which one knows to be comfortable, and where the sport is good.

I think in the spring the two best months are March and April; April for choice.

At Ellon the river can be comfortably fished with stocking waders. At Newburgh part of the fishing is done by boat and partly by wading. When the tide is low one fishes from the bank, or wading; when the tide becomes higher one adopts the boat method, and the estuary which one fishes there becomes a large inland lake, in which very good sport may be had.

The "Killer" fly is most popular (see Illustration.) It is made in various shapes and forms, each of which has its devotee. Black, white and red tube are often successful, and a small "Devon Minnow" is also killing. The fly has to be worked in a peculiarly quick and jerky manner, not as in ordinary fly fishing, the presumption being that the fish takes the fly for a small sand-eel. An ordinary trout rod may be used, but it should be a powerful one, as the fly is fairly heavy to cast, and I have spoilt more than one light trout rod by using it for this purpose.

Of the Autumn months, July, August and September are the best, and of the three, August is the best of all.

The river is within easy walking distance of both the Udney Arms at Newburgh, and the Inn at Ellon,

and in these days of high prices this is a notable consideration, because personally I find that at many fishing hotels the water is five or more miles away from the hotel, which means very costly hiring, with the further disadvantage that you cannot pop out at a moment's notice, and take a cast if so inclined.

At Newburgh there are golf links and excellent bathing. The sea-shore is very beautiful, and the many sea-birds which one sees, including great flocks of wild duck, add to the charm of the locality. Some people prefer the Ellon stretch, as there is not a great variation in the volume of the river due to the incoming tide, but I think on the whole I have had better sport at Newburgh than at Ellon. Newburgh is not upon a line of rail, but there is a motor-bus service from Aberdeen to it. (12 miles).

With regard to Ellon, the coast branch of the Great North of Scotland Railway stops at the station of Ellon, and the hotel is only a few minutes' walk from the Station.

Both hotel proprietors keep an excellent stock of tackle, and with regard to the particular fly which is in vogue there, I think it is better to procure it on the spot.

Large baskets are often got, ten to twenty finnock and sea-trout being quite a fairly common occurrence. I do not think this water is as widely known as it should be, and in these days, when the cost of living has advanced to such an extent, it is something to hear of a water which can be fished at a reasonable cost, and where there is practical certainty of sport which is from fair to excellent, dependin on the season, and other conditions.

The amount of water which is available at Newburgh is about four miles.

A very large number of fish are taken by the net at the mouth of the river.

In 1891, according to Mr. Grimble, 6,528 salmon and grilse were taken by the nets, and 300 by rods, and since then the lessees of the nets have refused to give information to the Fishery Board of the numbers of fish taken by the coast nets in the Ythan district. There the coast nets are a greater curse to this river than they are in many other places, and were the netting to be restricted there is no doubt that a very much larger take by the rod would be got. The bag and stake nets are very close on either side of Ythan mouth, and should certainly be put wider apart. This would mean that the spring angling would improve very much, increasing the value to the proprietors of the upper waters.

The Marquis of Aberdeen owns the largest part of the river, having about fourteen miles of it. Mr. Gordon of Ellon, Mr. Gordon of Esslemont, Mr. Udny of Udny, and Lady Gordon Cathcart, are the chief proprietors. The Marquis of Aberdeen is most generous in giving permission to fish his water. How far this would be affected by the sale of the Haddo House Estates I am unable to say at the moment.

I would here suggest to someone who is a keen angler, and interested in those of his fellow anglers who are less well endowed with this world's goods than himself, that he should make a motor tour through Scotland of all the different fishings which are either open to the public by payment, or which are attached to hotels who let rods on their water, and during certain months of the year allow their

visitors to fish free of charge. To embody this in a book would be to give an extremely valuable compendium of the information which anglers restricted in the purse are longing to welcome, and it would have an enormous sale.

The "Sportsman's Bible"—otherwise Messrs. Watson and Lyall's Sportsman's Guide—to some extent gives this, but to my mind the "Sportsman's Guide" wants to be re-written, as the information is in one or two cases incorrect, although, of course, the Guide is, on the whole, most valuable, and a book which I constantly keep by me, and as constantly refer to.

I came across some years ago a charming book issued by a firm of Sporting Agents, I rather think of the name of Wallis, which illustrated all the places which they had to let. I feel sure that if some private individual, as I have already said, or some firm, would take up the matter, and give a volume even at 10s. 6d. or more on the subject of semi-free waters, it would have a most astonishing sale, if each water were illustrated, and the correct tariff of each hotel were given, and where hotels are not available, farm house quarters, giving the names of the farms, and also the charges made for board and lodging.

In speaking of the Ythan, I should have mentioned (although it hardly comes within the scope of this book) that rabbit and wild-duck shooting may be had within the tidal mark.

The Ugie, a small river in Aberdeenshire, the main portion of which is only about six miles long, is quite a good stream for sea-trout and finnock, and also in the Autumn for salmon. I have on several occasions fished it, and made very good baskets

of finnock and sea-trout, chiefly the former. Much of the river is of rather a sluggish nature, but here and there are some interesting streams and pools. There is quite a number of good-sized brown trout in it, and Mr. Andrew Murray has, I believe, killed them up to four pounds.

The Ugie scarcely comes under the category of salmon rivers, but after the nets are off from the end of August, should there be sufficient water a good many salmon may be killed from then onwards until the end of October.

The Ugie salmon run pretty heavy. The chief sport, however, is with sea-trout and finnock in the lower reaches. Scotts Pool, Craig Pot and Cruive Pot are amongst the best of the Pools.

A large portion of the Ugie is open water in this far, that for a small sum, daily, weekly or season tickets may be had. Peterhead, I think, is the best place to put up at, as you can reach any portion of the water very easily by train from there. The best months for finnock fishing in the Spring are March and April, and again in August, while September and October are the two best months for salmon. Fish have been killed up to thirty pounds with rod. Wading is practically unnecessary, and a fourteen foot rod should cover any part of the water.

On one occasion, while fishing there in the Spring, the " Zulu " was the only fly which the fish were taking, and, unfortunately, I only had one " Zulu " in my book. After I had killed twenty fish the red tag of the " Zulu " had got worn away, and the fish refused to take it. I hunted high and low for something with red in it, but could find nothing ; then I remembered that I had on a waistcoat lined with red flannel, or similar material, and snipping off a tiny

piece with the scissors, I whipped it on to the end of the "Zulu," and I killed fifteen more finnock, which I feel sure I would not have done otherwise, as the fish were only taking a fly with a good deal of red in it.

CHAPTER XIV

Salmo Salar—Enigma—Does he feed in fresh water—Is nature a "Hass"—His store of fat—The irritation theory—Liqueur to round off meal—The diner and the mouse—A diving experiment—The food available—Getting fit for mating.

VERILY the salmon is an enigma, and a very abstruse one at that!

One of the greatest puzzles is to decide whether or not the King of Fishes confines his gustatory proclivities to the sea only, or whether he condescends to have his palate tickled by such less luxurious fare as the river can offer. I think the general concensus of opinion at present is to the effect that the salmon does not feed in fresh water. Personally, I am by no means convinced that he does not feed in fresh water.

Firstly, is there any reason why he should not enjoy the pleasures of the table, both in the river and in the sea? Why should the salmon, who has to enter a river of fresh water to perform a certain duty, be deprived of the sustenance which he will find there? The law may be—undoubtedly often is—"a hass," but Nature never is. Surely metabolism would be conducted on better lines if the fish continued to absorb nourishment in his new surroundings than be dependent on an internal store

of fat. Why? Because a hundred cases may arise where he has to live a much more strenuous life than normally, and his fat, if he lives on this, might not prove equal to the extra strain put upon him.

The salmon, for instance, in a sluggish river like the Aberdeenshire Don, will, from his exertions there, have less call on his store of fat than a fish in the rocky, tumultuous Awe.

Has it been proved that the fat stored by a salmon is sufficient to carry on its life through a prolonged stay in fresh water, under what must often be strenuous circumstances—far more strenuous than any likely to arise while he is in the sea, gorging himself upon a highly nutritious diet? Did the fish quoted by Hodgson take that butterfly for an artificial one, where the irritation theory might hold good. The answer is "No." The butterfly floated on the surface, and while on the surface was taken by the fish. How could a floating butterfly possibly irritate the fish lying under several feet of water?

Take a pool in which there are, say, twelve fish. Eleven let the fly or bait go past, while the twelfth takes it. Surely, then, one might argue that the eleven had had enough to eat at the moment the fly or bait was presented, while the twelfth felt inclined for a bit more, and having fed, looked on the gorgeous lure of "Gordon" or "Jock Scott" as the liqueur brandy which, served with the coffee, rounds off an elegant meal, and so took the fly.

Treherne states that three grilse caught in Norway were found gorged with insects—apparently "Daddy-Long-Legs"—and that Norwegians had found half-digested food in salmon.

Again, if the digestive organs of a salmon in fresh

water are in normal condition—and there is no reason to suppose that they are not so—then presumably they are exercising their functions equally in fresh as in salt water, because if they were not doing so, some degenerative alteration would be found in these organs.

What happens to a muscle in the human body if it is not exercised? Atrophy takes place, and surely some atrophic change would be found in the digestive organs of a salmon which had spent any considerable time in fresh water if they had not been exercised. But I cannot find any proof of this.

Again, it may be argued that if salmon feed in fresh water, why do they not increase in weight? But is it proved they do not, and if it were proved that they did not increase in weight, might it not be that the poorer quality and lesser abundance of the food in a river did not suffice to keep the fish at or near the weight it had attained on leaving the sea for the river?

I think the ejection theory may have something in it. An old gentleman is dining at the "Ritz," and, replete with a huge meal, opens his mouth to yawn. A waiter suddenly stricken with madness, dashes up to him and hastily thrusts a dead mouse into his widely-opened mouth. What is the result? In the twinkling of an eye the diner ejects the foreign object, and being thoroughly nauseated thereby, parts with his entire dinner like lightning.

A salmon seizes a spun dace, which has been well primed with formalin. To the fish this is as disgusting a thing as the mouse to the diner, and acts as an instantaneous emetic, with the result that the angler finds nothing in the stomach of his salmon,

and argues that, therefore, it does not feed in fresh water.

I wish I were a millionaire, and I should engage a first-class diver, make him acquainted with what we know, also what we do not know but desire to know, of the life-habits of the salmon, and having done so, direct him to spend several seasons carefully exploring the deep pools in several rivers of a different character, and carefully note the result of his observations. I feel sure they would be illuminative, and would probably clear up many problems, including the pons piscatorium—do salmon feed in fresh water ?

Malloch, in his most interesting book " The Life History of the Salmon," says :—

" If salmon do feed in fresh water there would be nothing but parr, smolts and trout for them to feed on."

Now, I cannot think that an angler of Mr. Malloch's undoubted experience and standing believes this. Do trout live only on their own fry, or on salmon smolts ? Has the river nothing else to offer the trout, and if to the trout, why not to the salmon ? What about worms, fresh water shrimps, flies, larvæ, etc., which form the diet of Salmo Fario ? Should these delicacies not also tempt the Peer of fish, Salmo Salar ? for I daresay grilled steak and onions may equally appeal to a miner and a duke. Of one thing I am positive, and that is, that I have over and over again seen kelts taking March Browns on the River Don, and am almost equally positive that in the spring of last year I saw kelts chasing (presumably with food in view) small fish in the Pool below Fintray House.

Malloch also states that he has found flies and

larvæ and the early ephemeral and caddis flies in the process of digestion in many sea-trout kelts. If sea-trout, of the same genus as the salmon, then feed in fresh water, why not the salmon itself? Spawning is the supreme and crowning act of the salmon's short life, and to carry out that act he should be in great vigour and form for this purpose. Before a man gets married does he live on a reduced diet? No, he does not; he does his level best to get into the highest condition for mating. It is a natural impulse that he should do so. Would a prize fighter prior to the fight of his life go fasting, or live on winkles and vinegar? Looking at it from the natural and the physiological point of view, I feel convinced that salmon do feed in fresh water, although I cannot definitely prove that it is so, any more than Malloch, in my opinion, proves the opposite.

I am not dogmatising, but merely expressing my opinion, and am naturally quite open to conviction and correction when I receive adequate proof that salmon do not feed in fresh water.

CHAPTER XV

Indian fishing—Rods and tackle I used—Eyed flies better than gut loops—Striking a Mahseer—Baits for Mahseer—The Baby elephant—My biggest Mahseer—The Fakyials—Pafta and Bassah—That snake—Barilius Bola—Dynamiting a pool—Man v. Rod—Outfit for Indian fishing—The wily Dolphin—Buttered Captain—The tail of the Doctor's shirt—A novel fishing outfit—The ladies' teeth—Beauty in death—A tench on a Salmon fly.

I WENT to India in 1895, and as I heard there was very good fishing to be had I took with me a 16ft. fly rod, built specially heavy for Mahseer, a 12ft. spinning rod, also heavily built, and a variety of spoons, phantoms and flies. The reels which I took were to match the rods, and with two hundred yards of line upon each. I used an undressed line for spinning, as I thought that with the heat it would probably get sticky. In addition to a dressed fly line I took an undressed one for the same reason. I got one or two flies the dressings of which are mentioned in that excellent book of Thomas "The Rod in India," and as this book is now rather hard to procure, I will quote the dressings of the flies from it:—

No. 1. Not named.

Body	...	Orange wool with gold twist.
Tail	...	Yellow.
Wings	...	Yellow with a touch of red on the shoulders.

No. 2. Body ... Dark yellow.
Tail ... Peacock harl.
Wings ... Black with a few peacock harl in it.
No. 3. Body ... Red with silver twist.
Wings ... Black tipped with white.
No. 4. Body ... Very full with tag and two or three turns of silver twist, peacock feather legs and bunch of harl over wings.
(As Thomas says, this was a rough looking fly, but he was very successful with it.)
No. 5. Blackamoor Tag three or four turns of gold or silver tinsel, silver towards base of tail, two or three sprays of peacock harl from the end of the tail, feathers that end without an eye, and are feathered only on one side.
Body ... Peacock harl very full and ribbed, but with gold or silver tinsel, Legs or hackle commencing small, a little short at the tail end of the body, and carried up to the shoulder, hackle increasingly large and increasingly thick.
Wings ... The deepest black procurable, and as glossy as possible.

I am compelled here to say that eyed flies are better for India, as gut loops perish very quickly, and owing to the heat are apt to draw.

I have also found that many bright salmon flies such as the Silver Doctor, Silver Wilkinson, Blue Doctor, etc., are good killers.

I always fish my fly for Mahseer just as I would

a salmon fly, although I have met fishers, who believe in a short, sharp jerk. This I think is a mistake.

I have only fished some of the smaller rivers for Mahseer, and have never killed anything very large, so that I cannot claim in any way to be an authority on the subject, but any man who can kill salmon can kill mahseer. The largest fish are very seldom got on fly, but usually on spoon, and it is worth while to take a good selection of spoons with one to the East, as they do not perish like other tackle.

Mahseer are like salmon in this way, that in varying circumstances they will take a large or small fly, or a large or small spoon.

All my fishing, or at least, the most of it was done from a dug out; a very narrow canoe, which measured anything from twelve to twenty feet in length, and is cut out of a single tree-trunk. It is a very kittle thing to sit in, and if the fisher is not a swimmer, it is a good thing to lash two dug outs together, whereby you get much more stability, and an inverted kerosene box makes quite a good seat with a cushion on it, for trolling purposes.

Mahseer, of course, can be got by baiting with paste, and many other things, but to the active man spinning or casting a fly will appeal most. I do not, although, agree with Thomas' remark "my plan is to strike as quick as lightning for a trout, but for a salmon or mahseer not at all." Because, in still, slack water, one has to strike one's salmon, and my experience was, one had also to strike one's mahseer. Of course in strong water, as every salmon fisher knows, a salmon will hook himself, also a mahseer.

As regards spinning the natural bait for mahseer,

the best tackle I know is the one of which I have already given an illustration. It was invented by Mr. James Harper of W. Brown and Company, the famous makers of phantom minnows, and any amount of small fish suitable for baits can be purchased in the nearest bazaar for a few pice.

I should recommend every fisherman going to India to procure, if possible, a copy of Thomas' "Rod in India." I used to have one myself, but it is many years since I left India, and it had either got mislaid or I had given it away. I hunted many booksellers' shops to get a copy, but failed. I wrote to my friend, Mr. Marston, of the "Fishing Gazette," who very kindly lent me his copy, as I wished to read it again.

One of the most delightful excursions I had, although it did not result in many or heavy fish, was on one of the smaller rivers in Assam. I sent out my baggage the day before with the necessary servants to make a camp at a convenient point on the river. I sent for my own use a small Swiss cottage tent. These are very portable and very useful. The baggage went upon an elephant, who was the proud parent of a very charming batcha. I drove off from my bungalow at 3 p.m. in the afternoon, and laying a dak by the way, reached my camp just before dusk. The baby elephant I may say caused a great deal of amusement in the camp. My servants used to tease it in rather a playful way, and had quite roused its youthful ire. I had a very fat khansamah, who was on the way from the cook house to my tent with one of the courses for my dinner. On the way he passed the baby elephant, who remembering how he had been teased by the pani walla an hour before, thought he would take

the initiative, and went for the khansamah, trumpetting loudly. He rushed at the old man, knocking him head over heels, much to the detriment of his spotless chupkhan, and incidentally the stew, which was to form part of my dinner. The old man's yells speedily brought help; he was lying on the ground kicking for all he was worth, while the baby punched and prodded him to his great satisfaction.

I had made arrangements beforehand for a small dug out as the river was by no means a wide one, and in fact in most places would have been better fished wading.

I started off the next morning with my shikari, and two boatmen, who paddled me up the river a mile or two from the camp. I trolled a 1½ spoon on the way up, and secured several small fish.

As we got higher up, the river became enclosed in a rocky canyon, enormous rocks going right down to the water's edge, the water being anything over 20ft. deep. In this long pool I spun a small natural bait, a supply of which I had got the night before from some local fisherman.

We were going along very smoothly and silently, when I got a "rug." He took it like a tiger, and dashed off up stream as hard as he could go; he kept down very deep, and I did my best to get him up. It was an ideal place in which to run a fish as the water was deep, and so far as one could tell, there were no sunken rocks. His first rush took out about 50 yards of line, and then he paused and sulked. After a run of about fifteen minutes, I got into the boat a fine fish of fifteen pounds, which was the biggest I got on that expedition.

Apart from the mere catching of fish, it was a

delightful holiday. I was away for four days, and killed a great many fish of three to ten pounds.

Small mahseer is really not bad eating, and I had rather a good cook. It is a very rich fish and rather inclined to be oily.

It has always been a matter of regret to me that I never was able to go up the Brahmaputra to Suddya, where Mahseer are very plentiful, and where some very big ones are to be had.

The best boatmen I came across in Assam were of the tribe called Fakyals. So far as I know there are only two villages of these in Assam, one below Jaipur on the Dehing River, and the other near Jorhat. They are an extremely clean, good-looking race of men and women, who, I believe are a cross between the Singfo's and the Chinese.

On one occasion I was asked by my boatman to come and see some of their elderly people, who were suffering from various complaints. They offered to pay me for doing so, and of course I said I should be very pleased to see them, and do what I could, but that I would take no payment. I saw several of their people in their huts, and gave them such medicaments as my hospital could supply, and in return they gave me some pretty native cloths, beautifully woven and dyed in very pretty and original patterns. They are Buddhists by way of religion, and quite the nicest people who inhabit Assam.

I went up to stay with my friend Charlie H. at his tea garden, and he told me that he and his wife killed excellent baskets of two varieties of fish in the Dehing. These fish were respectively known as "Pafta" and "Bassah." They used ordinary trout rods, and killed them with a small fly spoon,

ordinary trout flies, and sometimes a tiny phantom minnow.

The first afternoon, neither my host nor hostess were able to accompany me, but they put me in the hands of an old shikari, who took me down to the river. It is a curious thing with regard to these two fish that they come suddenly upon the rise; one mement the river is unruffled, and still; in another second the whole water is boiling with fish, and this continues for half-an-hour to an hour-and-a-half. Then they go off just as suddenly as they have begun to rise, and you will not kill another fish.

I put up a cast with an "Alexandra" and a couple of other flies, and fished, and fished, and fished, with no result—the surface of the water was unbroken. I said to my old shikari:

"Are there any fish here?"

He said: "Great numbers of fish, Sahib, as you will see presently, but the hour has not yet come."

I stopped fishing and lit a pipe, and conversed with the shikari on various topics of sport. All of a sudden the fish began to break the water, and the shikari said:

"Now is the time, Sahib."

In half-an-hour I had killed ten fish, weighing from about quarter of a pound to one-and-a-half pounds, which is about an outside size for these two fish.

Mrs. H. had an interesting experience on one occasion when she went down to fish. She had wandered down by herself and commenced fishing a tributary I think, but not the actual Dehing. She had just finished the cast, and looked up at the opposite bank, where she saw, to her horror and amazement, a full grown tiger looking at her from

out of the foliage on the opposite bank. This was bigger game than she had anticipated! Fortunately, the tiger did not, as it might easily have done, spring at her across the narrow river. She, however, gave up fishing that day, and went home with rather mixed feelings on the subject of fishing in India!

Very large mahseer are caught, as most of my readers know, but I have not been fortunate in killing anything over fifteen pounds in weight, although I have seen a fish of fifty-six pounds taken with rod and line myself.

I went on an expedition once with a friend of mine for three days up the Dilly river. We sent on an elephant with the baggage and servants, the day before, to a certain place where we were to camp.

We got a great many fish on spoon up to five pounds and ten pounds, but nothing bigger, although I am perfectly certain that in some of the upper reaches where the river expands into a great long silent pool in a rocky gorge, there must be some monstrous big mahseer.

We enjoyed our three days' camping immensely, and on the way home, driving my friend's four-wheeled buggy, I suddenly became very silent. My friend remarked on this, and asked why. I said:

"Oh, nothing."

I began to chatter volubly to him, but I noticed that he seemed rather deeply wrapped in thought. I said:

"The boot is on the other leg now, and the veil of silence has fallen upon you."

He replied:

"Yes, I was thinking."

"Well," I said, "what were you thinking of?"

He said:

"I asked you the question first."

Something had evidently happened which neither of us was very willing to discuss. At last my curiosity got the better of me, and I said:

"Well, look here, if you will promise not to laugh at me and tell me what you were thinking of, I will tell you what occupied my attention."

He gave the required promise, and I said:

"I could have sworn I saw a snake dart across the road about half-a-dozen yards in front of the horse, like a flash of lightning, but the whole thing was so extraordinarily quick that I almost doubted my eyesight."

"Well," he said, "curiously enough I thought I saw that same snake, but," he said, "as it was so extraordinarily quick I could not believe my eyes, and felt sure that you would make ribald remarks if I told you of it!"

No doubt we had seen that snake, as it is notorious at what lightning speed a snake will flash through the grass.

Another friend of mine, whose bungalow was situated on the Dehing River, and whose compound ran right down to the river, told me on my enquiring that there were a good many mahseer in the Pool exactly opposite the garden, and he said:

"If you come with me, I will show you them."

He took with him some pieces of orange peel, and on throwing these into the pool—which was a smallish one—fish of apparently up to six pounds or eight pounds came up and sucked the orange peel down very quickly.

He said he had often fished that pool with every

bait he could think of, but could never kill a fish; they were too cunning. Then one day while eating an orange and looking over the fence by the pool, he noticed that when he threw the peel in the water the fish came up and took it. He got a small trout fly, stripped the feathers off it, carefully attached it to a piece of the peel, and with a very light line cast it into the pool at the same time throwing in with the other hand some pieces of orange peel. A fish immediately took the portion which had the hook in it, and after a good run was landed—four pounds or five pounds in weight; but the extraordinary thing was that although he tried over and over again he never could repeat the performance.

One day, while fishing a tributary of the Dehing, to catch small fish for spinning, I was lucky enough to kill ten of the Himalayan trout—Barilius Bola. It was a small stream about the size of a large Scotch burn; I was fishing with tiny flies. This was in the middle of the forenoon, but I found upon a subsequent excursion that they took best just before dusk.

Barilius Bola, of course, in some of the larger rivers run up to about two pounds in weight, but I do not think the stream I was fishing contained anything over quarter of a pound, which was about the size of what I killed myself. It is a very beautiful fish, being exquisitely spotted. They were very keen and gave excellent sport, considering their small size, and the water I was fishing in. I was using three flies, which were, so far as I recollect, the Butcher, the Zulu, and the Priest.

I meant to mention when I was talking of artificial baits for "Pafta" and "Bassah", that I found the Blue Wagtail a very good killer.

I was talking to one of our engineers one day

with regard to a river on which he was constructing a bridge, and I asked him if he knew whether there were any mahseer in it. He said he did not know, but if I would meet him at the bridge pool the following day at 3 o'clock, he would demonstrate to me whether there were any or not.

It did not occur to me how he was going to do this, as at that moment I was called away to my hospital.

The following afternoon my wife and I trollied the four miles down to the river, where we were to meet him. There was a large circular pool just below where he was going to build the bridge, and he told me that he proposed dropping into the pool a couple of dynamite cartridges to see what the contents of the pool were. It was, of course, a very heterodox proceeding, but as we were in howling jungle it did not seem to matter and, the novelty of the thing rather appealed to me.

A lot of natives in their dug outs had got wind of the Khel, and surrounded the pool with their dug outs drawn up on the bank.

A couple of cartridges were thrown into the water, and almost instantaneously there was a miniature geyser, and the surface of the water was covered with fish of all sorts, some of which were dead, but most of which were only stunned by the concussion. Dug outs shot from every direction, and the natives were quickly busy gathering up the spoil.

Among the fish were unfortunately no mahseer, which was a great disappointment. We took three or four of the fish which looked to me to be a species of cat fish, home in a kerosene tin, placed underneath the seat of the trolley, much to the horror of my

wife, for they gave vent all the way home to the most peculiar squawking noise.

On another occasion when I was camping on the banks of the Dehing, it occurred to me that it would be rather fun to have a contest of man versus rod. One of our assistant engineers was a very fine swimmer, and I made a banderbast with him for the next day. He made the condition that it should be kept absolutely private, and that no one should be present except he and I.

He was extremely fat and tubby, and I felt sure would make a picturesque figure in the water, so I promptly sent out men to the neighbouring villages to say that the sahibs were going to have a great tamasha, on the river bank the following day at 2 o'clock. I said that the utmost secrecy must be observed, and that Blank must not know that I had sent out notices. I instructed my men to keep the crowd behind the jungle until Blank was actually in the water.

At 2 o'clock Blank stepped from his tent, clad a la nature with a cricket belt round his waist, and a sola topee on his head. In appearance he suggested a somewhat middle-aged Bacchus, and I am afraid I yelled with laughter, when I saw him. I attached a treble gut cast to the cricket belt. I was using a powerful 14ft. mahseer rod which I have mentioned before. He stepped majestically down into the water, and proceeded to swim across the broad pool.

I waved my hand, and in the twinkling of an eye, the bank was black with spectators, much to Blank's annoyance, and he commenced to use language certainly becoming neither man or fish. It gave him a great stimulus, and he did his very best, but in a very short time I proved to him that the rod

was the better of the two, and triumphantly landed him.

The sun was appallingly hot, and when he got up the bank he was almost in a state of collapse, and I had some difficulty in restoring him to his normal condition. It was one of the funniest sights I can remember.

A man I knew, who was a keen fisherman, always wore when fishing, a sports jacket of natural undyed wool. He was never fond of soap and water at any time. This sports jacket took the fancy of a planter in the neighbourhood, who was somewhat of a "nut." Some months after the planter got his jacket he had it washed, as it was getting somewhat soiled, and in the process it shrank so much that he could not get into it. It was an expensive garment, and he was very wrath. He called upon the man whose jacket he had fancied, and said what a rotten outfit it was, it had so shrunk that he could not wear it.

The originator remarked:

"That's very extraordinary, I have had mine for five years, and it has not shrunk a bit."

"How did you wash it," said the planter, "then to prevent it shrinking?"

The originator said, fiercely, in reply to this:

"*Wash it*, good God, you surely did not *wash* it?"

"Well," said the planter, "how do you clean yours?"

"Clean it," he said. "I never clean it, but when it is dirty I hang it out in the sun!"

As I am afraid Thomas' book is not easily procurable, I may be forgiven if I give here some suggestions as to the tackle which should prove useful

to a man going to India. The least amount that one can possibly do with is :

One 14ft. Greenheart Washaba or split cane steel centre rod for fly or trolling.

One 12ft. ditto for spinning.

One 8ft. to 11ft. rod for small fish. (The reels for these should not contain Ebonite, but should be made of gun metal or possibly aluminium, although of the latter metal I have no experience in India.)

Two larger reels should be capable of holding at least 150 yds., preferably 200 yds. of line, and the trout rod a similar length of line to that used for trout.

Half a dozen phantoms from 2in. to 6in.

Half a dozen Wagtails from 2in. to 4in.

Wire spinning traces can be used, but as it is a very damp country, for the most part, these should be carefully dried and greased each time after using.

Half a dozen treble gut casts and one or two of the heaviest salmon gut single casts ; as in salmon fishing, so for mahseer fishing, the finer you fish the better, but it is no use taking out a lot of gut casts, as if laid by for any length of time they only perish.

A landing net for small fish is useful, as is a good stout gaff, preferably not of the telescopic variety.

I used to keep my gut in grease-proof paper in an air tight box.

Gun metal swivels should be used, and a dozen or two of these should form part of the outfit, as it is very easy to make up a trace at the waterside, when required.

Personally, when fishing I always have a few

swivels loose in my pocket, which I can indent on, if necessary.

A number of loose trebles and single hooks should also be taken for repairing mounts.

Just as in salmon fishing, it is necessary to dry one's line by taking off as much from the reel as has been wet.

Lockfast joints on the rods are by far the best.

I do not believe in porcelain rings for the spinning rod in India, because they are so apt to get broken, and as the fisherman may be hundreds of miles from the tackle maker, it is far better to use the ordinary gun metal or phosphor bronze ones for this purpose.

A good supply of archer leads should be taken, and of course some cord or old line for whipping purposes; fly scissors, a table vice, and hackle holder often come in useful.

A teakwood box to hold one's rods is very necessary. My rods have been carried on elephant back, in bullock carts, sine springs, the bottom of dug-outs, and the backs of Nagas, Cassias, Miris, and Fakyals, and a box protects them.

I always used a jacket and breeches of thorn-proof substance; I wore putties, underneath which I put a length of oiled silk, which I find a protection against leeches, which are a great curse in the jungle; flannel shirt, sola topee, and strong shooting boots with nails one inch apart, completed the kit.

With such an outfit as I have indicated, the fisherman cannot go far wrong.

DOLPHIN.

I had some curious fishing in the Indian Ocean on my way home from India. I had all my rods

with me, of course, and was wondering if I might not get a little sport at some of the ports we touched at, and tackled the skipper on the subject.

He was a funny chap, that skipper; he loved to go about in carpet slippers, and took butter with everything. He plastered his bread and toast half an inch thick with it, he ladled it on to potatoes, beans, tomatoes, sardines, in fact on to anything and everything. I wondered if, when offered the command of his ship, the owners had buttered his toes, as we do to keep a kitten from straying, to keep him coussie on his boat! His information rather damped my ardour; he said I'd see plenty of fish in the harbours we touched at, but it was unlikely they'd take a bait.

Seeing I was disappointed, he kindly added, "but I'll show you some fine deep sea trolling if you'll remind me of it in a week's time."

The days hung heavily on me, and I got more eager and excited as that one dawned on which I was to remind him of his promise.

I was drinking the "biff tea" at 11 a.m. sitting in my deck chair watching the lazy blue rollers of the Indian Ocean, when he harked by.

"Ah, Captain, what about the trolling?"

"Right you are; now you go to 'Pills' (the disrespectful name by which the ship's Surgeon went) and ask him if he has an old shirt, and if he has, get a few strips about two feet long and three inches wide, and bring them to me." Having made my request, "Pills," I think, wondered whether he ought to call the quartermaster and have me put in irons as a dangerous lunatic; however, seeing that I hadn't the wild eye of a homicidal

maniac, and seemed otherwise normal, he merely queried—

"What the devil for?"

"Oh, I'm going fishing with the skipper."

I saw his eye roam uneasily to a bottle marked Potass: Bromid: but as I burst out laughing he said peevishly—

"Are you pulling my leg? What on earth do you want strips of white shirt for?"

I'd had my fun and so explained. He was no fisherman, but entered into the spirit of the sport to come, and hunting through his lockers found a dress shirt fit to discard and with a pair of surgical scissors clipped me off four chunks. I took these to the Captain and followed him from his cabin on to the deck.

We rigged up a Kelvin log line, a sailor carried the end up the after mast, threaded it through an eyelet at the top of it, and fetched it down again. The skipper now attached a weight (I don't remember how heavy, as it is twenty years ago) about four feet from the end of the line, spliced on a hook about the size of an ordinary gaff, but of course barbed, and I rigged up one of the strips of linen on the hook. We now dropped it astern and let out what seemed to me about 600 yards of line; then the skipper arranged a tin can on the windlass, tied with pack thread, so that when a fish was struck, the thread would break, the tin can drop and warn us as we sat at lunch in the saloon that a fish was "on."

There were but a few pasengers on board, and only the skipper, "Pills" and I were in the know regarding the fishing expedition.

We had nearly finished lunch when bang went

the tin can above our heads, causing an elderly spinster to very nearly swallow her eight octave false teeth. Skipper, "Pills" and I dashed from our table up the companionway on to the deck, leaving (so we were afterwards told) consternation writ large on the faces of some of the passengers, who thought at least we were going to be shipwrecked.

Arriving on deck, we saw a huge object slashing through the waves just where our bait should be.

"Got him," said the skipper, and then two of us wound in.

As we got the fish nearer I saw it seemed a long thin creature inshape, rather like a very large carpenter's rip saw.

Skipper informed me it was a dolphin; a quartermaster eased the brute over the taffrail, and he lay floundering on the deck. I should say it weighed 60 pounds or more, but we didn't weigh it.

"Now watch it die," said the skipper.

Truly it was a wonderful sight. I had never before thought anything on earth approaching dissolution could be a thing of beauty. But a thing of beauty this fish certainly was, as slowly its whole body showed a kaleidoscope of colour varying from the pale delicate tints of breaking dawn to the riotous harlotry of colour of an Eastern sunset. Gradually, as death supervened the colours faded, leaving it an inert mass of greeny grey.

We were going ten knots when we got the fish, and we killed altogether half a dozen of varying size. One arrived minus the body, the head only being landed.

It was curious fishing, a ship's mast for spinning rod, a windlass for reel, several thousand fathom of

kelvin log for line, and the tail of the ship's doctor's dress shirt for bait !

Another curious catch I had some few years ago. The ruling passion is always strong in the breast of the Angler, and I took my 16 feet Hardy to practise casting on a lagoon like stream a few feet wide, and very muddy, which flows out of the Ruislip Reservoir. I like to do a thing completely in detail, and put on a salmon cast and a fly about one and a half inches.

After a few casts, to my utter astonishment I hooked (in the mouth) and landed a tench, in the presence of four witnesses. I was so astonished that I wrote to the "Field," whose Editor told me he believed I was the first and only fisher to kill a tench on a salmon fly. I also wrote to the "Field" regarding my ocean fishing, and the Editor said that what I caught were not true dolphin, but coryphee.

CHAPTER XVI

Fisherman's weather—What the shooter misses—The joys of the morning—A change of front—The thunderstorm—Varying winds—A mossy bank in June—A perfect night but no fish—Glengirnoc.

No man perhaps is so keen a student of meteorological happenings as the fisherman. Other sports may be almost, yet seldom quite marred by adverse weather, but an extra inch or two of rain may completely put the angler's calculations out.

As a rule the shooter misses the unfolding of the Eastern dawn, while the fisherman who, at certain seasons know the value of the adage about the early worm, walks along the moorside to the river, cursing fate that he is not as ready with the brush as the rod. The gorgeous hangings of purple and pink and gold, now faint and delicate, broadening into the Oriental blaze and riot of scarlet and bronze and blue, changing as it were from the diaphanous garment of the innocent debutante, to the flaunting depths of colour of a woman of many seasons, whose innocence has given place to bright allurements; so from dawn to broad day.

The scent of the birches, with the silvery dew still scintillating on their delicate leaves, the faint honey perfume of the heather, the gold of the broom and whin, and the palest blue of the lupins which

cluster in myriads on the pebbly beach of the river, add to the glory of what he knows will be a day of the silver doctor and the silver blue and other bright and gaudy flies.

On the morrow, perhaps, the day will have changed, the heavens seem dark and charged with mighty sorrow, great thunderous black masses roll up like chariots leviathan, great streaks of copper line the blackness ; the birches droop their feathery heads, the very dew seems grey and cold, with lowered temperature the tree leaves refuse to distil their perfume to the Summer air. The angler who does not pay heed to his second thoughts pauses as the first flash of the lightning almost blinds him, and he shivers as the artillery crash of the thunder reverberates amidst the hundred hills.

But after sheltering in some shepherd's cottage for an hour or two, he passes on to his beloved stream and finds, after weeks of drought and deadlow river, just the right tinge of colour in the water, while passing straws and leaves tell their tale of a rising stream, it may yet be a red letter day in his calendar.

Another dawn shows yet another picture, the whole sky a plain of hodden grey, a soft gentle grey, with a thick drizzle of rain coming down so softly that he scarcely feels it wet his face as he trudges. It is going to be a day when the heavy plop, plop of the trout will mean a full basket and a day when many a salmon will come up " head and tail " in the alluring way he knows so well, and knows it augurs more than one tail in the heather before the day is out.

Of wind there is infinite variety and no two rivers or lochs are suited by the same. Here one finds a dowie, soft, South West wind is that which fills the

basket, there you must have a touch of the Nor' West to skim the pools. Another requires an East wind to be in form, and it is said that in one Scottish loch the trout rise best if not, only, in a snowstorm.

One of the best day's salmon fishing I had, began as pure disappointment, gusts of rain and a bitter cold North East wind of great force—it was October —plagued me from 1 p.m. when I began to fish, until 4 p.m., when like lightning the wind veered straight to the South West and I got three fish in an hour or so—seventeen pounds, twenty pounds, and thirty pounds.

At times weather doesn't seem to matter much, given the right size and colour of water, even a wind due East fails to put the fish down, at other times the size and colour of water may seem perfect and you can neither kill with a fly nor a spun bait.

As regards the comfort of the fisher give me June and September all the time, when one is unlikely to get extremes in the way of wind and temperature.

As long as I live I shall never forget sitting on a bank of olive coloured moss on a day the first week in Jnne, the wind was soft and mild, just gently rippling the pools, the sun was gloriously bright, the air warm, the river just the right height, the trees first leafy verdure was at its best, the fish were on the move (it was a five-fish day), and one could hardly believe that not many hundreds of miles away was all the carnage, din and ordeal of a bloody superwar. But for that thought it seemed the best of all possible worlds. Grim snow clad Lochnagar was almost smiling, the birds were all atune, their music accompanied by the perfect orchestration of the rippling Dee.

I remember once, being anxious to take a fish

South with me next day, going out to fish the Dee from 8 p.m. till dusk—it was June—the night seemed perfect. The sky was soft and grey and gentle ; the slightest breeze was from the South West, the colouring of nature was at zenith, just the right light on the water.

Surely it would be a three or four fish night. Both the keeper and I were agreed that we had never seen a better fishing night from any and every point of view. I walked five miles and fished ten pools, all good water and full of fish. I fished all I knew, put forth my very best effort, tried a dozen flies, tried prawn, spun a gudgeon, yet in spite of all, we did not see a single fish rise nor did I get the faintest offer. Talking of woman being coy, uncertain, hard to please, the dear creature isn't in it with either the male or the female salmon. Had I killed fish and found no ***her*** fish among them the adage might have held good ; well che sara, sara, and we went home to bed disgusted.

GLENGIRNOC.

By kind permission of the Editor of the Windsor Magazine.

Ah, wae's me for Glengirnoc, where the bonnie burnie rins,
Where wave the silver birches 'mid the gowd upo' the whins,
With gnarled Scots firs shadowing aneth the purple hills,
An' the mountain air's a tonic for the warst o' human ills.

Oh, I could spend a lifetime there, an' spend it brawly weel,
For there's mair o' God 'n a yaird o't than there is o' ony deil.
Dra' in yer breath an' oot again, ye'll scent the heather honey—
A God-gi'en draucht that's worth a heap o' trash that folks ca' "money."

Tae sit an' dream the river by, great thochts come quick an' faist—
The gorse, the trees, the dronin' bees—oh, gin 'twould only laist!
'Tis but a dream that passes wi' the fleetin' simmer day,
A dream that paints the lily, yet a dream that pynts the way.

I've never left thet bonnie glen bit I had cleaner thocht;
It seemed like wonder magic by a great magician wrocht.
I better thocht o' mankind, an' they better thocht o' me,
For auld Glengirnoc helpit me a finer weird tae dree.

CHAPTER XVII

Balmoral Waters once again—Happy preparations—The journey North—Arrival at Littlemill—The cordial greeting—The first evening and first fish—Nellie and the hens—A ten fish day—The 35 years old half guinea trout rod—Macbeth's tribute—Wonderful luck with tiny flies—Curious colouration in fish.

In 1920 I had again the great good fortune to receive permission to fish the Balmoral Waters.

For reasons connected with my work I chose the month of June for my holiday.

The moment I received the glad news I could smell the pine woods, visualise the innumerable wild flowers which there adorn in myriads the field edges and the river bank, hear the rondo of the river as it tumbled over the stones into the inviting pools, and engrave a hundred mental pictures of the rural joys which should be mine for a few weeks in what I think the most beautiful spot in the British Isles.

An evening or two I spent most happily going over lines and reels, rods and fly boxes.

I knew of course from the "Field" and other papers that sport on the Dee was phenominally good that year, that fish were abundant, the river in good order, and the prospects of sport roseate to a degree.

We left London (my wife and I) on the 28th of

ANNE FHUILE POOL, ABERGELDIE, ABERDEENSHIRE DEE.

Photo, Bisset, Ballater.

To face p. 164.

May in the morning, and were lucky enough to get a third class coupé to ourselves the whole way to Aberdeen, where we arrived late that evening. It was a pleasant contrast to war time travelling to while away an hour or two over lunch, tea and dinner in a comfortable restaurant car. The journey was smooth, punctual as to time, and not at all fatiguing. The state of every stream and river was duly noted as we glided by them.

Saturday and Sunday we rested in Aberdeen and the following Monday we left by the 3 p.m. train for Ballater, which we reached at 5 p.m. The carriage which I had ordered to meet us was waiting, and after a few minutes' chat with the driver to arrange for the necessary single turn each day, with the hirer, we drove off through the village. I stopped at the saddlers to make a few enquiries as to what sport was being got and with what flies.

Then across the bridge and by the route already mentioned in a former chapter, to our destination. On the way, near Scurry Stane we met Lundy who was to be my guide, philosopher, and friend during our stay, and stopped to have a chat with him.

I told him I might go down that evening by myself to have a cast in the boat pool, and would start serious fishing the following morning.

Dear old Mrs. Begg was on the doorstep to greet us as we arrived, and after the bestowal of luggage, etc., we sat down to a sumptuous tea. Would that we could always command such fare. Jean's or Lizzie's (they are both adepts in the art) scones with butter newly churned that day, real heather honey from their own bees, as different as a Rolls Royce is to a 'bus from the sticky glucosy mixture of the so-called " honey " in the Southern shops, and tea

made with the lovely soft water so different from the hard chalky fluid of London's water mains.

We ate such a hearty tea that dinner at 7.30 or 8 was quite out of the question, and so arranged that a cold supper should be left to await our return from the river.

Upstairs I raced and in record time unpacked, donning knickerbockers and soft shetland wool stockings for the first time for nearly a twelvemonth.

I got my waders out, put them in the bag with reel and fly boxes, got my long combined gaff and wading staff, my 16ft. "special" Hardy and we were off. A walk of little over a mile and a half brought us to the Newton pool. I left the Boat pool which really was the nearest, as I like the Newton to fish, so much better.

How glorious it all looked; the distant hills now purpling in the evening sun, the first fresh leafy green of all the trees, and the inviting music of the river made a perfect prospect.

As I was putting up my rod I saw several fish move. The water was a good size, a shade clearer than I would have liked, but very fishable.

At last my rod was up and a small double silver teal (usually called silver blue) on the fine cast—I was ready.

Now as will have been noted in a former chapter, I killed a fish in the first hour of the first day I fished; and I wondered if this would be repeated.

I began to cast well up in the stream, for to all appearances, taking into account the warmth of the air, the soft South West wind and the temperate feel of the water to the hand, the fish should be well up in the neck of the pool.

What a thrill ran through me as once again I

pulled the line off the reel and felt it go swish in a well directed cast, bringing the fly down gracefully, lightly on the surface.

I had made but half a dozen casts when I shouted "Got him."

I had the palpitation usual when one hooks one's first fish after a long spell of inaction in the fishing line.

A nice fish, a little devil to run and no fear of his being a kelt at that time of year.

There was nothing very noteworthy about the run and in ten minutes I stooped to gaff him. The first fish—what a joy—a little beauty, clean run "without spot or blemish."

I fished hard for a couple of hours longer and then gave it up. A few fish rose but not many, as we sat to watch the beauties of the evening before going home. I lit a pipe and we sat silent as we watched the changing colours on the distant hills, a marvellous kaleidoscope of colour. The sun dipped over the ridge, it grew a little darker, it was time to go home. Packing the fish lovingly in the bag, we wended our way back to the farm, a little tired, but with that feeling of what I may be forgiven for calling Fisherman's bien etre, and which is a very special and joyous thing known only to keen anglers.

We were up betimes and out in the garden, after a glance at the barometer which showed "set fair," to see what o' the weather. It was a splendid summer's day, blue sky, bright sun, the hum of bees and flies gave a persistent note. I was itching to be off, but first to breakfast.

Porridge with cream ad lib, scones with "lashins" of butter, honey, black currant jelly, and tea with cream also ad lib. If Lucullus never ate a Little-

mill breakfast and it is not recorded that he did—then Lucullus never lived!

All this at 8.15 a.m. At 9 a.m. Lundy arrived on his bicycle. He got the rods and tackle and waders bestowed on his good steel steed. What that bicycle didn't carry beats Bannagher. I've seen it hung round with two fishing bags, waders, brogues, large despatch case with lunch and two Thermos flasks, two rods and a long gaff, aye and with three or four salmon forby, many a time.

All this ready and we were "to the road."

It is a fairly long walk to the Newton from the farm, a good Scotch mile and a half, aye and a bittock to that. It was not a red letter day, for I only got one fish, but as far as pure delight went it was a golden letter day.

I fished right down to the long pool but saw nothing more. The fish got was killed in the Newton at 11 a.m.

The trap met us at Scurry Stane at 6.30.

The next day we began at the foot of the water and I killed a fish of six pounds at the Bulwark at 11.30., on the prawn, after putting three flies over the pool.

I killed a second fish of six and a half pounds in the same pool. I went down to the long pool and fished it carefully over twice, but neither saw any fish nor killed any.

We had lunch on returning to the Bulwark pool; The day was now blazing hot and the flies so bad that my wife, who hates smoking, had to smoke a couple of cigarettes in pure self defence.

I commenced again, and at 2 p.m. killed a fish of seven and a half pounds with a small blue charm.

An hour later I killed another of nine pounds with the same fly.

I fished Pol Vheir, Little Pol Vheir, Streams of Garin and the Newton on the way home, but killed no more, although I saw plenty rising.

We went home fairly early as we were tired, not yet being quite in training, and what with the great heat, heavy trouser waders and the long distance between most of the pools, it was little wonder.

We dined at 8 p.m., went for a short stroll up the Girnoc burn and came back in time to go to the byre and see the cows milked. There was a collie called Nellie who brought in the cows, and after the milking was over, to see that dog, on the command "Nellie put the hens to bed," round up all those hens and chickens and chase them into their respective hutments was an education in what a dog can be taught to do, simply with a word. It was often screamingly funny too; one or two old roosters would, for a moment, elude her, but she took no notice until she'd disposed of the main body, when she proceeded at the rate of "knots" to round up the stragglers, who with feathers awry and tails cocked shrieked blue murder as they fled terrified to roost.

After milking was over and the hens had "ceased from troubling," we went back to the house quite glad to see a little log and peat fire, for the evenings were often quite chilly.

A cigar, the morning paper, a little tackle sorting, and healthily weary we went to bed.

Next day I began again in the Newton pool, where I killed a fish of nine pounds with a small Silver Teal.

I touched nothing in streams of Gairn, Little Pol Vheir, Pol Vheir, Marmalade or the Treepool.

We lunched at Pol Vheir, and I remarked to Lundy that I thought it curious that in this pool I'd so far not seen even a fish rise. As I remembered the pool over twenty-five years it always held fish, and I'd often killed fish in it. Lundy said he'd seen very few fish in it this year (1920).

We reached the Bulwark pool at 2 o'clock, and after a short rest, for it is a longish walk from the last pool, I began at the neck with a small Logie and killed a nice fish of eight pounds, one of the best shaped fish I'd got so far.

I got a second fish with the same fly shortly afterwards of five pounds, also a beautifully shaped little fish.

I had a long rest and some tea, after which we walked down to the Long pool.

I tried several flies but to no effect, and just before we had to leave the riverside and walk to Scurry Stane to pick up the trap, I put a prawn over a dozen yards at the top of the pool and killed a fish of six pounds.

The next day proved the best day of my fishing.

I commenced at 9.30 at Bogswell, and after trying two flies over this charming and easily fished little pool, sat down to smoke a pipe and consider what I should do next.

It was a somewhat cloudy and windy day, and I felt that the flies I had used were too small; Lundy did not think so, but I thought I'd test the matter by putting on a Lord Saltoun (the well known Scotch trout fly dressed salmon size). I put one on just under half inch irons, double, and was half way down the pool when I hooked and killed a nice fish of six pounds.

I did not put off more time there as we had many

pools to fish, so we went on to the Douchels. I tried several flies but got no " rug " and very few fish were showing. I put up a prawn and killed a fish of nine pounds. Then one of eight pounds and one of six and a half pounds.

Leaving the Douchels we walked (nearly two miles) to the Newton, I missed the boat pool as there was already an angler there, fishing from the opposite side.

I should mention that as the river was now running low for there had been no rain for some weeks, I used a 14ft. Greenheart by Hardy, and lighter gut and still smaller flies.

After a rest, for the walk had been long and the day very hot, I put up a silver doctor and promptly killed a fish of eight and a half pounds. Out again, gave the pool a quarter of an hour's rest, while I smoked and chatted with Lundy, and with him pored over all my fly boxes.

As the silver doctor had just killed I saw no reason to change, so started off again. Much further down the pool I once more hooked a fish, and after a lively run killed a fish of exactly the same size as the last, viz., eight and a half pounds.

In the lower part of the pool where there was no run to carry the fly, I saw quite a lot of fish rise, and although I did try a fly over them, it wouldn't fish properly owing to the lack of stream. I put on a prawn and killed four fish of seven and a half pounds, eight pounds, seven pounds and six and a half pounds.

The next day was entirely blank, and the day following that, Sunday, was spent in the usual way, and ended by an excursion to the river where we sat for an hour or two and watched the rising fish, but

were eventually driven home by the flies and mosquitoes which were in myriads.

On the Monday we drove down and began at the Bulwark.

I was using the 14ft. and with a small double Logie killed a fish of six and a half pounds. It was a broiling day, cloudless blue sky and a brassy sun.

After resting the pool I put on a small double cabbage fly and killed a nice sea trout of one pound. Sea trout are few and far between in the Dee and only occasionally, when fishing for salmon, does one have the good luck to come across one. Grilled for breakfast there is no finer tasted fish, and this one tasted as good as he looked.

Next day I again began at the Bulwark and with a small double silver blue killed a fish of seven pounds, but saw nothing more all day.

The water was now becoming parlous low, the fish were getting exceedingly shy and I was at my wits end to know what to try.

When in the morning Lundy arrived, he saw everything laid out on the garden seat by the door *ezcept* the salmon rods.

"Are you going to fish for trout to-day. I'm afraid it's too bright for them?"

"No, I'm going to try a new plan of campaign altogether—salmon on a trout rod."

Lundy is not a man of many words and I could see he was resigned but sceptical.

We reached the Newton. Lundy took the rod from it's case and here I must relate its history. I had bought it as a 10ft. Greenheart from Milne of Aberdeen over thirty-five years ago. I had killed tons of trout on it, and on the Don about twenty years ago two salmon of fifteen pounds and eighteen

pounds which had been kind enough to permit one to land them on sea trout flies, and stout trout gut. About ten or twelve years ago I was going over my rods and found the rod so warped that I nearly discarded it.

However, I was loathe to adopt this course as it was an old and tried friend, and I put it aside. I read one day in a paper—I forget which—that Foster of Ashbourne had a method of wire ribbing, which Aladdin-like made old rods into new. I sent it to them and lo ! it *was* a new rod. It was now nearly as straight as it was originally, and of course much stronger.

I had forty yards of tapered trout line to a backing of at least sixty yards of undressed silk on a very light aluminium reel. I put on a trout cast of ordinary strength not finest drawn gut of course, and put up a very tiny silver doctor single iron (one of Farlow's small summer special) as a dropper, and a double iron silver teal—not much bigger, as tail fly. Lundy protested against the dropper, but I'd done it in my youth and was obstinate.

What a delight it was to fish it, single-handed 9ft. 6in. (it has lost 6in. off the tops in course of years and adventures), how exquisitely the wee flies lit on the water. Salmo Salar thought so too, for at the second cast I was into him.

Lord ! how he ran, played the very mischief ; half the time in the air, half in the water, I couldn't put a great strain on him with such tackle and such a rod, so I gave him his head ; I'd plenty of line, and I could follow him anywhere in the pool.

Lundy was quite excited for one of so placid a disposition.

Now the fish bored up stream, then a rest, down-

stream like a train de luxe, over to the other side and back again. All this for the space of five minutes or so, then I felt—click—he was gone! My heart pounded, for a millionth of a second. I instinctively struck—he was on again!! I surmised he'd got the dropper, worked it out, and as he gave a joyous kick up of his tail to go to the depths, had caught the tail fly. Lundy was now excited as I was—these were glorious moments.

Now he did exactly as he liked with me, evidently he wasn't hooked in the mouth any longer.

After cruising at many knots an hour all over the place it suddenly struck him—"Why not a trip seawards," and no sooner thought than done. He dashed down, I following half in half out of the water. The pool ended in a lagoon on my side with the outgoing stream a long way across, and the question was, could I wade it, as I hadn't enough line to let me go round the end of the lagoon. I chanced it, and thank the gods it was all right. Lundy had meanwhile run round the end of the lagoon with the gaff and was ready for me. Out of the pool dashed the fish into the very strong stream which led to the pool below. I didn't care a button for now I could follow him, even if he took me to the next pool, the Streams of Gairn, nearly half a mile down.

Gradually I worked him from the centre of the stream to my side and Lundy deftly gaffed him as he dashed onwards.

I gave a yell of delight—how like boys we old stagers become under such circumstances.

"Well, Lundy, that's not a bad feat for the wee rod is it?"

He was full of praise for the rod. We sat down,

filled our pipes, had a mere " suspicion " of B.L. & Co. to wet the fish, and an animated " crack."

One day Lundy was otherwise engaged, and Grant kindly arranged for Macbeth to have a day with me. He arrived at 9.30 a.m., a very stalwart Hielander of over 6ft. from the Athole Country. He shouldered the tackle, I taking my share ; and with my wife and my brother, who had come to stay with us for a couple of days, we marched down to the Newton, as we found someone in the Boat Pool fishing from the Invercauld side.

I fished every pool most carefully : Newton, Streams of Gairn, Little Pol Vheir, Pol Vheir and some bitties without result. We lunched at Pol Vheir. I never linger over river-side meals, being always keen to begin fishing again. I finished before the others and commenced to fish.

I was doing my utmost to show Macbeth that I could throw a fly and heard on the way to the next pool, with much delight and many a chuckle, that he was eating his lunch a few yards away from my wife and brother and never took his eye off me for a moment, watching every lift and cast. This in itself was a tribute, but what better laurel wreath could one have than his remark, sotto voce (and not intended to be heard by my relatives), " My God, and isn't he the lad to throw ! " It was delicious.

I was getting rather worried that I hadn't been able to hook a fish for his benefit, but was lucky enough to get one with fly in the Bulwark, and one with prawn in the Long Pool, later on.

Now a curious thing happened with regard to the latter fish.

Macbeth gaffed it and carried it from the pool

over some thirty yards of pebbles to the grass bank. I didn't notice anything peculiar about the fish during this transport ; but the moment he laid it down on the bank, I observed that the colour of the fish from the head to the dorsal fin was of a peculiar grey black and from the dorsal fin to the tail it was of a *very* pale lemony yellowish tinge ; I pointed this out to my wife, my brother and the ghillie. When life was extinct in the fish it resumed the natural colour of a healthy salmon.

I wrote to Mr. Calderwood, Chief Inspector of Fisheries for Scotland, stating these facts as witnessed by four people, and he said he could not account for it, but had once killed a fish in the Ewe which was olive green all over, and that one was always hearing of something odd and new with regard to salmon. I then wrote to Mr. Sheringham of the "Field," stating the facts and asking if any reader of that paper could throw light on the subject. A Mr. Albert Wade was good enough to reply in the "Field" as follows :—

"In reply to Major J. L. Dickie, in last week's issue, the curious coloration of the salmon caught by him, suggests imperfect melanism (black) and icterism (yellow), a curious aggregation in one fish, which, had it lived, might possibly have merged into 'a strangish olive green colour all over' like the fish referred to by Mr. Calderwood. I have seen examples of icterism in sea trout.—ALBERT WADE."

It was now half past four, and we packed up and went to meet the trap which awaited us at Scurry Stane.

CHAPTER XVIII

A splendid run—A queer experience at the Bulwark pool—Homeward bound.

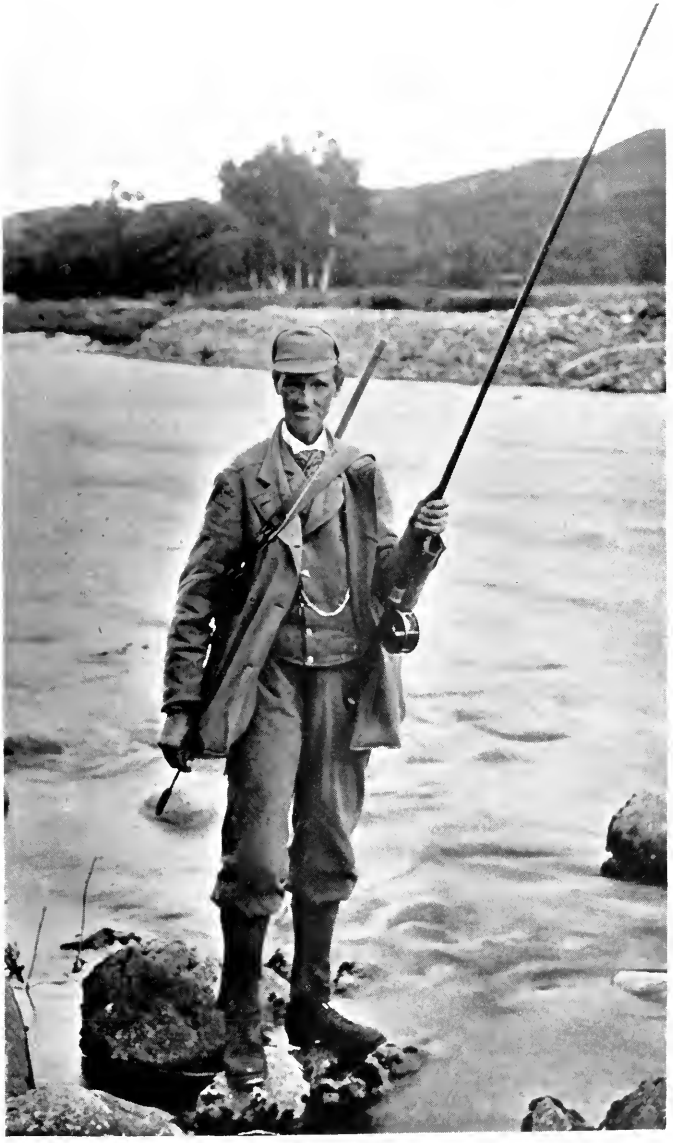
ONE very sunny day we started off, about 9.30 a.m. and my wife and my brother were to come down later and meet us at the Douchels. I had the wee trout rod. When we arrived at the pool I intended to commence operations on, I saw the water was only about four feet deep at the deepest. It looked very hopeless and Lundy shook his head at any prospect of sport. I put on the finest cast I dared, with a tiny Silver Teal, and waded in. I could see three fish lying some yards away, and it was pretty obvious they could see me. I think much nonsense is talked about *all* salmon being scared by human presence, as I've pretty often seen fish, put a fly over them, seen them take it within a few yards of me, and seen everything they did until I brought them to gaff. The same happened that day. The three fish took no notice of the fly. I let out more line, and saw a fourth fish come up and take the fly. He was off the moment he took the fly, downstream as hard as he could leg it, into a broad shallow not more than three feet deep. He tried nosing on the stones; there were no rocks, only round stones

about the size of melons. Then he rested until a well directed pebble woke him up again and he ran out some fifty yards of line. I edged out on to the beach and he came to me faster than I could reel up, leaving too much slack to be comfortable from my point of view. However, he was well hooked and at length I got it in. Lundy was handy with the gaff, but the fish got a glint of it and off he went again a la flying Scotsman, straight across the water. Nothing is more trying or uncertain than running a fish in shallow water. I followed, into the water half across the river. Then he bored up stream for a bit. I was gradually putting more pressure on him, gently but firmly ; once he turned half over, he was weakening.

Again I got him nearly within range of the gaff, but the sun flashed on it, and off he went again, quite renewing his youth and kept going merrily for another five minutes, then he came down and I could see was wobbly, and as I felt if I didn't get him soon, he'd get me, I put on as much pressure as I dared, Lundy got well behind him with the gaff, and out he came, bright as a new shilling. He was a pretty fish and turned the balance at nine and a half pounds. I was perspiring very freely, for it was a grilling day.

We sat down and had a pipe and discussed the run. It had been a thrilling one with such feeble tackle. After a rest we walked down to the Douchels where we found my wife and my brother waiting.

When I told them of the exciting run—more exciting as one saw every movement of the fish from start to finish—they were very disappointed that they had not started out when we did.



JAMES STEPHEN, for many years fisherman to the late Sir W. Cunliffe Brooks, Bart.

Photo by Lady Cunliffe Brooks.

To face p. 178.

I fished down the whole beat, but touched nothing more, although we saw plenty.

One day I had a curious experience with a fish on the Bulwark Pool. It is rather difficult to describe and would be still more difficult to draw. The Bulwark was a long semi circular wall, formed of boulders and at the foot of it was a series of piles driven into the bed of the river with a narrow beam nailed to the piles about six inches from the top of these. Successive spates had washed out the boulders from behind the piles for a good many yards, leaving a shallow space of water about two feet deep and two feet wide between the piles and what remained of the breakwater.

I hooked a fish of eight and a half pounds, which gave me a very fine run, and eventually I got him very near the gaff, but not quite ; he slipped under the beam into this little shallow space, went out over the top of the beam that was about four inches under water, and round underneath the beam again into the shallow space, where he lay perfectly still with his nose between two of the remaining boulders.

Here was I then with my cast twice round the beam, and a fish which might at any moment dash off again. I said to Lundy to be quick with the gaff before the fish had recovered, and could start off again ; then I would cut the reel line above the cast, wade down and disentangle the line from the beam, and he could lift the fish up on to the Bulwark.

Both our hearts, I think, went pit-a-pat, as Lundy did this, and the moment he got the gaff into the fish, I cut the line, released it, and he carried the fish up the face of the Bulwark.

It was a most extraordinary thing to happen,

and one would have failed had not the fish been pretty well done.

The best day I had with the small trout rod was three fish of eight pounds, six and a half pounds and seven and a half pounds. I started off in the Newton, and killed an eight pound fish with the tiniest blue charm. I then went back to the Boat Pool, and commenced at the neck. Just as I had begun to cast a fisherman came down the opposite side, and began to fish a considerable distance below me. It seemed to me that he cast very scornful glances at my tiny rod, or else thought I was a duffer, or a trout fisher gone mad. He was using a rod which looked to me to be seventeen feet or eighteen feet, with line to match. I could not see his fly, but probably for size it matched the rod and line. I was using very fine gut, and the smallest sized silver blue, which I had.

He fished and I fished, and every now and again he looked back over his shoulder to see what I was doing. Presently to my great delight, I was into a fish, which ran up into the neck almost out of the pool, then came dashing back again to where I hooked it, across to the opposite side, and back almost to my feet, leaving me a tremendous line of slack to get in, which, with the small reel I had, was rather difficult. I played this fish for about twelve minutes, and then Lundy gaffed it, six and a half pounds.

We now went on, passing the Newton, which I did not think it was worth while to fish again, and when we got to Streams of Gairn, I was sorry to see two rods wading from the opposite side, so I gave that a miss too, and went on to Little Pol Vheir. Lundy saw a fish rise before we got down to the pool, and after a rest and a pipe I went in again. I had not made three casts when I hooked fish number

three. He led me a pretty dance all over the place, and I thought would take me down to Big Pol Vheir. This really would not have mattered much, as I could follow him, but owing to slippery round stones, the going would have been rather bad. When I was just on the brink of the rush, which led out of the small pool into the big one, he stopped and came up again, and in a few more minutes, Lundy gaffed him. We were both very pleased with the small rod that day.

I went down late one evening after Lundy had gone home, and the forrester, who wanted to see me kill a fish, came with me. I tried three flies over the Douchels, but with no result. I then put on a small gudgeon. A big fish took this almost the moment it alighted on the water, and ran straight to the foot of the pool, then over to my side, leaving me a tremendous lot of slack to get in, and before I had done it, he dashed across to the other side, got round a rock, and broke me. I got nothing more that night.

I think I have related most of the interesting happenings on this holiday, and it was with great reluctance that I packed up to leave on the afternoon of the 24th June.

As we drove to the Station we passed Begg, who was going to Ballater with a big load of timber from his son's saw mill.

We had a little time to wait before the train started, and just before it left, Begg, whom I had not seen to say good-bye to before leaving the farm, ran into the Station very hot and dusty. He said he felt he must come and say good-bye to us before we left, which was most thoughtful and kind of him, as it meant a good deal of trouble to him.

All my life I shall carry the memories of that happy holiday ; by the fireside kill every fish over and over again, on the long Winter nights after the season has closed and the rods are resting in my den.

CHAPTER XIX

Loch fishing—A lazy lawyer—Pike fishing in Staffordshire—Storr lochs in Skye—Catching Char—Her broken ribs—Cleansing the decanter—Temperament in Fishers—The lady and the Dr. Babu—Paying a visit to Assam—Sports to be had—The Author in the lady's bath.

I have not done a great deal of loch fishing, because it is not to me the acme of sport to sit in a boat all day cramped and pent up. I much prefer the exercise and scenery which a winding river offer one.

One of the first lochs I fished was an artificial loch at Aboyne Castle, then belonging to Lord Huntly. It was full of small perch, and very well fed large pike. One of the most successful anglers on this loch was a French chef from the castle.

I was quite a boy when a friend of mine and I, having permission to fish, had a day on it. Our baits were minnows, phantoms, and spoons, and the latter we found much the most killing. Each took it in turn to row the boat and to fish. We killed eighty perch and pike between us. There was a great rivalry as to whom should kill the biggest fish, and curiously enough we each killed a fish of thirteen pounds weight, which were the largest we got.

On another occasion on the same loch I was asked by a friend of my brother's, a solicitor, to join him in

a day's fishing. As he was considerably older than me, I offered to take the oars first. I thought it a little odd that he allowed me to row on until lunch time, without offering to take a hand at the oars, but when we had finished lunch, and he suggested that we might commence again, taking up his rod and leaving the oars to me, I fairly boiled over, and said :—

" You asked me to come out for a day's fishing ; so far it has been half a day's rowing. I am going to fish now, and you will take the oars."

He was rather a pompous person, with a great sense of his own importance, and he positively glared at me, but seeing, I suppose, the light of battle in my eye, he calmed down, and meekly took the oars, and I kept him hard at it for the rest of the afternoon, killing three more fish than he did, much to his disgust.

I fished a private lake in Staffordshire on several occasions. I did not happen to have any spoons, but had one or two old phantom minnows from 4in. to 6in. long.

My host's son-in-law was fishing with live bait. A live bait did not prove nearly so attractive to the fish that day as the phantoms.

We commenced fishing at 2 p.m. and by 5 p.m. I had a splendid array of pike on the bank up to twelve pounds.

One of the estate workmen, happening to go past, was astounded, and said he had never seen so many fish taken out of the lake at one time. I told him he could have the lot, if he liked, and he straightway took every pike, hanging to nearly all his buttons with bits of string ; the most grotesque sight possible.

I had some very good fishing in the Storr lochs

in Skye. There is no driving road to the loch, and I obtained a guide in Portree to show me the way. He was quite a character ; a great politician.

The trout in the Storr lochs were very beautiful fish, and I got an excellent basket, weighing up to three quarters of a pound, fishing off the shore, as I had stupidly forgotten to obtain the key of the boat. I waded in along the edge, and on going into a bed of reeds, found a wild duck with a brood of five young ones. The mother was so scared that she dashed off, and left her progeny behind. I took one of them up in my hand and examined it. It did not seem in the least frightened, and made no attempt to get away, but when I put it down in the water again, it scuttled off quite pleased with its adventure.

I have only once killed Char, and that was in loch Bulig, eighteen miles from Ballater in Aberdeenshire. A friend and I drove up there one day and got a very good mixed bag of trout and char. None of the char was very large, but they are beautiful fish.

Loch Kinord at Dinnet and Loch Davan I have often fished. On the first named loch I have killed many large pike, and also bigger perch than I have killed or seen anywhere else. This loch is very interesting from the point of view of relics of pre-historic man. Many of which have at one time or another been fished up out of the loch, and the late Sir William Cunliffe Brooks built a small museum at the side of the loch, which contained interesting specimens, which he had collected over a large number of years.

I was once staying in Ballater, and was asked by the doctor there, with whom I happened to be staying at the time, to see a patient of his, a farmer's widow in the neighbourhood of Loch Kinord. I

drove down and found that she had sustained three or four broken ribs. I "scobbed" her up as well as I could, and told her she was to remain quiet in bed until my return visit. Going back four days later, I met her in the yard, and asked her what she meant by disobeying orders. Her reply was characteristic :—

"Me keep in bed for twa or three broken ribs—never, come roon tae the back an' I'll putt the stane wee you."

She was indeed an Amazon.

On another occasion years before this happened, a friend and I called at her farm to get a drink of milk. She had been cleaning a decanter by shaking up coarse gravel in it, and a large piece had got stuck in the neck of it. She said to me :—

"Let's see the pint o' yer wand till I get the gravel oot o' the bottle."

I refused, saying it would break the point of my rod, whereupon she remarked with a chuckle :—

"Weel, weel, it can jeest bide there, an' it'll kittle the tripe o' the next yin that drinks oot'nt."

It is curious how fishermen's temperaments differ. I have seen men who can lose a fish, and a very big fish, with the utmost sang froid, while others will give vent to the most violent language on even missing a fish.

Some years ago a worthy soldier of the rank of Colonel was fishing a certain Northern river; he had been out for three days running, and killed nothing. On the afternoon of the third day he returned at the usual time, and happened to go into the dining-room, while the waiter was laying dinner. The waiter was a mild little man, and anxious to please.

"I hope, sir, you had good sport to-day."

"Don't speak to me of sport," shouted the Colonel, purple in the face; and by way of emphasising his remark seized the end of the table-cloth, on which was laid dinner for twenty or thirty people. He ripped the whole thing off the table, smashing everything on it: glasses, flowerpots, and all the other crockery.

The poor little waiter jumped out of the dining-room window on to the lawn, and fled for his life.

The Colonel footed the bill at once; it was no inconsiderable one, and left by the afternoon train.

Let us hope he was not married or had a family.

Once I went on a few days' leave to fish for mahseer, and the District Engineer's wife went to the Dr. Babu for a bottle of medicine. Two days afterwards she returned to him, and furiously shouted at him that it had gone mouldy.

"How dare you send me such medicine," she said, angrily.

The Dr. Babu, a very mild specimen, said in quiet tones:

"Madam, I humbly apologise, it is one dam' nuisance."

"How *dare* you use such language," quoth the irate lady.

"Indeed, Madam, I did mean no disrespect, but I have frequently heard the medical officer use the expression, when irritated, and I was thereby convinced that it was correct and good business!"

The same lady went to him upon another occasion, while I was absent, with a cut finger, and thought she would take a rise out of him.

"Do you think I will die from this cut finger, Babu."

"Madam, you will surely not die this time."

"But if I did die, what *would* the Station do without me?"

"Madam," humbly replied the Hindu, "God would surely provide one other Mem-sahib!"

It is often a wonder to me that people who go to India for a cold weather trip do not pay a visit to Assam. There are a good many things of interest to be seen in Assam—Peacock Island, a sacred place opposite Gauhati; Mount Karmikhia, also a sacred spot. The oil wells and coal fields of Margherita beyond Dibruguarh; the remains of a buried city at Dimapur, on the way to Manipur; the hill station at Shillong and other interesting places. The sunsets on the river baffle all description, and the broad Brahmaputra bathed in silver moonlight is a sight never to be forgotten.

If the traveller prefers to vary his journey, he can go back by train from Dibruguarh to Chittagong, and take the steamer there for Calcutta, or if he prefers he can go on direct to Rangoon from Chittagong to explore Burmah.

Excellent sport is to be had in Assam with rod, gun and rifle; jungle cock, green pigeon, blue rock pigeon, florican, and the finest snipe shooting in the world. Of bigger game, barking deer, fallow deer, and the lordly sambhur, which corresponds to the red deer of this country, not of course omitting buffalo, elephant, tiger, leopard and others.

My outfit for shooting consisted of a 12. bore double barrelled hammerless ejector, a double barrel 450. rifle, and a 577. double barrel rifle.

It is a beautiful trip from Goalundo to Dibruguarh, the boats are extremely comfortable, and from the decks of a river steamer I have killed many

"Pafta" and "Bassah," when the boat was tied up for the night.

Curious things sometimes happen on these boats. There used to be a bathroom on the lower deck for the men, and one for the ladies on the upper deck. The latter opened directly from No. 1 ladies cabin, as well as to the deck. It was a very cold trip from one's cabin down on to the lower deck bathroom, and when no ladies were on board, men always made a point of using the upper one.

I went on board the river steamer at Gauhati one morning very early, en route to fish, and told my bearer to get my bath ready. He presently announced that it was ready, and donning my dressing-gown I went to the bathroom, took it off, and was soaping myself vigorously when to my utter horror the door to the ladies cabin opened, and there stood a small red haired child of about seven years. She shrieked excitedly :

"Mummie, come here, there is a man in our bath."

I did not wait for mother to inspect me, but dashed out, naked, as I was and covered with soap, round to the other side of the deck where my cabin was situated.

I thought the incident had closed, as mother had not seen me, and might put it down to an extra vivid imagination on the part of her progeny.

As ill luck would have it, after breakfast, having taken it late, so as to avoid the lady and child, I went out on the fore deck and sat down, screening myself as well as I could with a newspaper.

Presently the horrid little pig commenced to walk round amongst the passengers peering into all their faces. When she came to me she pulled my

newspaper down and pointing an accusing finger at me, shouted :

"Here's the man who was in our bath."

Yells of delighted laughter from all the passengers of course.

I beat a hasty retreat.

A FISHERMAN'S IDEA OF BLISS.

Gie me my auld rod, reel an' line,
A curren flees weel preen't an' buskit fine,
Wi' aiblins jeest a salmon peel or twa,
Tak ye the rest o't be it great or sma'.

Up some green lovely glen ayont the warl,
Wi' nae yin there tae chide, or girn, or snarl,
A shoor maybe, o' dowie cloods a puckle,
An syne a glint o' sun tho' nae ower muckle.

Music o' bonny Dee as't cantly rummles doon,
Purlin wi' lauchter whiles, an' syne a froon,
Flirtin' in eddies, kissin' mossy stanes,
Skirlin' agin like happy skule free wanes.

Nae ribbon'd honour great or storied fame,
Cud yield me hauf the joy a cottage hame,
Wud gie mid Ballochbuie's birks on Dee,
Alane wi' nature, fish, an' fowl, an' tree.

Let me by Dee then dream a thousand years,
Nae care, nor canker, nae forebodin' fears,
I'll ask nae mair o' Thee, Lord, gi'en me this,
Tae me the peaceful sum o' human bliss.

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